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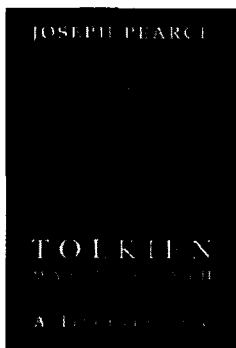
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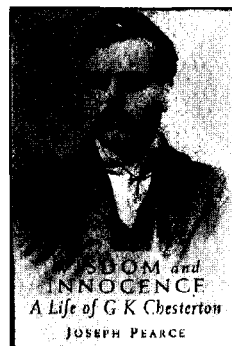
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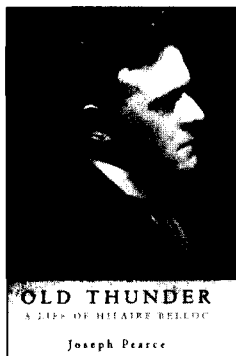
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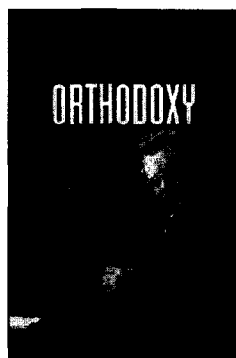
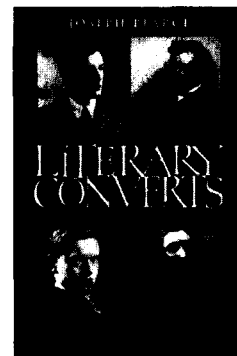


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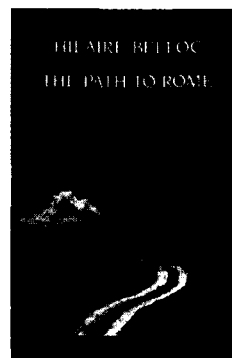
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On Ordaining Women

In "Ordaining Women: Two Views" (April), Sarah Hinlicky Wilson writes that "if the female cannot represent Christ because of her femininity, it is hard to understand how Christ in his masculinity can represent her in his death and resurrection."

It is not the case that a "female cannot represent Christ because of her femininity." That is an incorrect answer to the question, "Why can a woman not be ordained?" Any woman can represent Christ precisely because of her femininity. Most significantly, the Virgin Mary, through her grace-filled femininity, represents Christ as the penultimate model of submission to the will of God. What a woman cannot do because of her femininity is act *in persona Christi* as the person through whom Christ's saving grace is directly communicated to the faithful through the sacraments of the Eucharist and reconciliation, as Jennifer Ferrara competently explains. Through revealing the falsity of Ms. Wilson's subordinate clause, the irrelevance of the independent clause is also revealed.

Of course Ms. Wilson provides a rejoinder to the gender exclusivity of acting *in persona Christi*, claiming that to say a woman cannot stand *in persona Christi* is a denial of Christ's incarnation and resurrection. This is a bald assertion that does not seriously challenge or refute the Catholic understanding that maleness and femaleness are essentially different modes of being human. I'm not sure what to make of Ms. Wilson's assertion. Does she mean that the Catholic Church, which denies exactly what Ms. Wilson says cannot be denied, also denies the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ? Does she mean to say that the Catholic Church is actually some shade of Docetist?

Surely I am not alone in thinking that Ms. Wilson comes much closer to denying the importance of the incarnation by her many implications that the fact of Christ's maleness has no real theological significance.

It seems to me that the source of her confusion comes down to the Scholastic distinction between essence and existence that Ms. Wilson herself makes reference to and misapplies. Men and women are not in essence the same even though both are created in God's image (unless Ms. Wilson means that our essence is the same as God's). Men and women are in essence different, for "male and female He created them." Since essence ought to determine existence, it follows that men and women ought to be existentially different as well. Since every man's and woman's essence is damaged by sin, every man's and woman's existence is also damaged by sin. Christ's atoning death and resurrection are the only remedy for sin, but it does not follow from this that male and female existential differences are abolished by the unity of Christ. The unity of Christ properly orders the essential and existential differences between men and women not by negating them, but by restoring them to their original perfection as complementary parts of the human species.

Ms. Wilson is right about this: "Orthodoxy has been a battle from the get-go, as the apostolic epistles amply demonstrate." The battle and the demonstration occur also in the writings of the Church Fathers. In this battle, the Holy Spirit ensures the Church remains the "pillar of truth." Thus, the authentic teachings of Christ defended in the apostolic tradition are continued and developed during the patristic period and beyond. In the skirmishes about the ordination of women, the orthodox tra-

dition is this: women cannot be priests.

Mark L. Chance
Houston, Texas

I read with curiosity the exchange between Jennifer Ferrara and Sarah Hinlicky Wilson concerning the ordination of women. While both writers made some persuasive points, it is distracting to argue over shoulds, shouldn'ts, roles, traits, obligations, rights, etc. The issue is not really how women should behave in private or public life. The issue is: Does gender matter? Does gender add something to our humanity? Does femaleness make it literally impossible for a person to be ordained?

To answer no to these questions is to stray from the precision of incarnation into dangerous territory, joining company with the many through the ages who have said Jesus is only seeming God, seeming man, or who have denied the hypostatic union.

Let's start by considering the *fiat* of the Virgin Mary. Here we have a real, live woman, approached by a real, live lover (the Holy Spirit), who conceived a real, live child. I think we can assume that her *fiat* was above all a sexual response to the Holy Spirit. Her reply was not the dutiful "Yes, you know best, whatever you say" that is often depicted. It was an ecstatic assent, given with body and soul. Certainly, in Mary we can assume a perfect concordance between spirit and flesh; but her response, and its fruit, was no less physical than spiritual. The incarnation comes about through the specificity of the female sexual response.

A man may spiritually "give birth" to spiritual fruit, but only a woman could physically give birth to the Word made flesh. By analogy with Mary, although it may be harder to discern, can we not assume that there is something uniquely male about Christ's salvific role?

The doctrine of the Virgin Birth tells us that all of Christ's human na-

ture is inherited from his Mother. She could not have passed him the y-chromosome necessary for maleness. We must infer, then, that his maleness was given by his Father along with his divinity and not as part of his human genetic makeup. Jesus' maleness is not an attribute of his humanity but of his divinity. (Conversely, when Eve was created from Adam, Adam's x-chromosome may have been duplicated, or supplied by God in an additional act of creation.)

Jesus' masculinity is a supernatural attribute which nevertheless has a physical effect on his human nature. It gives a spin to his human nature. His maleness is the locus of the union between his humanity and divinity. Whatever vein of speculation one chooses to mine, it is clear: his maleness is somehow a key to the hypostatic union.

In our perennially Arian way, we repeatedly shortchange both the physical and the spiritual. The physical is considered "merely" physical, the spiritual belonging to a plane of higher truth. On the other hand, only the physical is thought to be "literally" true, while spiritual truths are seen as mere metaphors. But both are equal in value, although one is ontologically prior—there is nothing "mere" about the physical realm, the flesh taken on by our Savior. And spiritual truths are no less literally true than physical ones. Both are literal—one physically, the other metaphysically. Both are metaphorical—the physical is a metaphor for the spiritual, and vice versa. Both matter.

June McIntosh
Mercersburg, Pennsylvania

The masculinity of Christ does indeed explain why women cannot be ordained to the priesthood, but not for the reasons enumerated by Jennifer Ferrara. Nothing about Christ can be understood apart from the fact that God chose incarnation as His response to original sin. Thus, women cannot be ordained priests because priests image Christ as the

sacrificial lamb of God, as the ones who have committed their lives to representing Calvary though the Eucharist. The Eucharistic Calvary signifies not only human atonement for human sins stretching back to Eden, but also the restoration of the human loves and friendships sundered in Eden through original sin.

In Eden, the race lost not only its unity with God but also the unity between man and woman. As a result, Christ had two missions: the humanitarian mission of restoring unity with God and the gender mission of restoring heterosexual unity. The humanitarian mission of restoring unity with God required that the lamb of God be fully human and fully God. Accordingly, since women are as human as men, God could have incarnated as a woman. A female Christ could have restored the human race to its original unity with God. It is not

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Christ's humanitarian mission that required Christ to be male.

The maleness of Christ is rather required in order to restore the unity between men and women destroyed by original sin; for as Genesis 3:16 states: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." This passage indicates three gender consequences of original sin: the excessive desire or obsession of women for their men, male domination over women, and sexual inequality. Freeing the human race from these consequences of original sin constitutes Christ's gender mission.

These consequences are significant. In his letter "On the Dignity and Vocation of Women," John Paul II identifies male domination with chauvinism and blames it for the many ways in which women suffer discrimination and lack of proper appreciation for their equality and dignity. Chauvinism as a consequence of original sin necessitated that the Christ be a man. For due to chauvinism, a female Christ would not have been recognized by men as being their Lord, their Rabbi, their Savior. Christ exemplified sacrificial love, which chauvinism identifies as a weakness and as a peculiarity of women; according to chauvinism, maleness is about strength, independence, power, and control. Not so, taught Christ; rather, masculinity is for the sake of pouring out one's life for another in love, not for the sake of self-gratification and domination.

Fallen women also needed Christ to be incarnated as a man—and not only to teach men a lesson. Original sin weakened femininity to the point where it blinded women to the truth about their desire for love. Original sin derailed woman's transcendent passion for God with an egocentric passion for man—for a Mr. Right able to satiate desire. Fallen woman thus assumes either that Mr. Right will be perfect as promised by fairy tales or that accommodating his chauvinism and domination will be the sacrifice that enables her to be

loved. Thus woman needed not only to be freed from the harms of chauvinism but also from the misdirection of her desire. Women needed to learn not just that there can be only one perfect man, Jesus Christ, but also that men need not be chauvinistic. If Christ had been incarnated as a woman, these lessons would have been untaught.

If Christ had to be incarnated as a man in order to fulfill his gender mission, then it is not possible for women to undertake this mission. If it is not possible for women to undertake the gender mission, then it is not possible for women to be ordained Catholic priests. For the Catholic priest images Christ in his gender mission as well as in his humanitarian mission. This is particularly the case since the Catholic Church was founded as the remedy for original sin. Thus if the Catholic Church were to ordain women her priests would not be able to image the gender mission of Christ. But since the effects of original sin continue even unto this age, there is need for priests to image the gender mission of Christ.

Furthermore, since the refusal of the Catholic Church to ordain women is grounded in the gender mission of Christ, it is a refusal that promotes sexual equality. It is important that the Church promote sexual equality—for two reasons. First, it is through sexual equality that the harmful inequities resulting from original sin are countered. Secondly, as John Paul II points out, it is only when spouses recognize and appreciate the equality of the other that they are able to appreciate properly the other's spousal gift of self. Without this appreciation, marriages fail to properly image the loving equality of the Trinity. But we are made in the image of God and we love best when we love as God loves.

Therefore, it is in the interest of promoting sexual equality and Trinitarian love that the Catholic Church forgoes ordaining women. By so doing, she proclaims both the impor-

tance of Christ's male incarnation and the need to image his gender mission. This proclamation, in turn, witnesses to the ongoing effects of original sin and the need to counter those effects by relying upon the grace and wisdom of Christ.

R. Mary Hayden Lemmons
Associate Professor of Philosophy
and Catholic Studies
University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, Minnesota

The two viewpoints on ordination and women aptly illustrate how this issue is connected with the very concept of sacrament, and the Church's identity. Because priestly ordination is not explicitly mentioned in the New Testament, Sarah Hinlicky Wilson writes as if it were an invention of the Church, which can be remade as desired. She admits that words like Father and Son have no substitute, but then tries to separate these words from their very meaning. Ms. Wilson dismisses Scripture and tradition as "inconclusive" by blurring the distinction between basic discipleship and membership in "the twelve." The Church's documents on this issue have already explained that the economies of salvation and sacramental function are two different things. It is understandable that a Lutheran minister might not hold these Catholic beliefs. More disturbing is the number of Catholic theologians who choose to ignore them.

(The Rev.) Matthew Kowalski, OSB
Blue Cloud Abbey
Marvin, South Dakota

The exchange on women's ordination by Jennifer Ferrara and Sarah Hinlicky Wilson illustrates a problem that faces all liberal Protestant denominations, which is that it is philosophically incoherent to hold to *Sola Scriptura* without holding to the inerrancy of Scripture. Protestant theologians who reject the inerrancy of Scripture always end up finding infallibility somewhere else. Ms. Ferrara

finds it in Rome. Ms. Wilson finds it in her own judgments.

Ms. Wilson dismisses the exegetical case against women's ordination as though it is unworthy of serious discussion. She writes, "Scriptural injunctions to the silence of women in the Church are, first of all, not observed anywhere, not even in the churches that prohibit women at the altar. Women sing, chant, pray, and speak in tongues of humans and angels alike." This is sophistry through and through, implying that those scriptural injunctions must either be taken literally to a degree that would make the most ardent fundamentalist blush or else they must be completely meaningless. She then argues that "the injunctions against speech and authority are internally contradicted by the equally scriptural witness to the activity of women." It is that simple for her. The Bible contradicts itself on the subject, so we'll have to look elsewhere for the answer.

However, Ms. Wilson's central argument that men and women are ontologically the same cannot definitively address the issue of women's ordination, for the simple reason that Scripture forbids many types of people from holding the pastoral office, all of whom are ontologically the same as people who may hold that office. Are new converts ontologically different from other Christians? Are those who are not apt to teach or those whose lives involve a lot of public scandal ontologically different? Of course not. Yet according to Scripture none of them may be pastors.

As a liberal Protestant theologian who holds to *Sola Scriptura* but not the inerrancy of Scripture, Ms. Wilson needs someplace to turn when she thinks the Bible is wrong or contradicts itself. She finds the needed infallibility in her own judgments, simply restating her thesis as divine revelation when she concludes that ultimately, "the only justification for the ordination of women lies in the fact that God calls some women to it." To

put it plainly: No, He doesn't. Scripture, tradition, council, and pope all agree on this. Against such voices argue only the spirit of modernity, the sexual revolution, private opinion, and a handy charge of lack of charity against anyone who disagrees.

(The Rev.) Peter A. Speckhard
Faith Lutheran Church (LCMS)
Green Bay, Wisconsin

Sarah Hinlicky Wilson argues that the only real differences between men and woman are occasional hormonal stirrings and insignificant fleshly protuberances: "Men are fathers because of the organs they possess and women are mothers because of the organs they possess." She first fractures the human condition into physical, psychological, sociological, cultural, philosophical, and theological pieces and then calls on a Jesus-as-mystical-nihilist who proclaims that "in the resurrection they neither will marry nor be given in marriage, but [will be] like angels in heaven."

Ms. Wilson argues that who we are in essence (ontologically) negates everything we actually are in existence. Her argument is essentially a Gnostic one, negating the mysterious ontology that is incarnational, caught up absolutely in the messy physicality of it all. She loses sight of the fact that Jesus is referring to the Parousia when he tells us marriage will no longer be necessary. Which means that marriage, with all the differences between men and women, will remain until the end of human time.

Jennifer Ferrara's lucid exploration of the nuptial mystery and the symbiotic relationship of man and woman, on the other hand, points the way to God's transcendent vision and inscrutable ways which we cannot grasp, but which the Church nonetheless affirms.

Gil Costello
Seattle, Washington

My seminary rarely addressed the hows and whys of women's ordina-

tion, as the point was considered by all quite moot. My co-pastor, however, who is also my spouse and good friend and colleague, needs more than "that's the way we've always done it, and aren't we progressive and gospel-centered for it?" The articles by Jennifer Ferrara and Sarah Hinlicky Wilson were both engaging. I followed Ms. Ferrara all the way until she intimated that those priests who "steadfastly avoid having a spiritual relationship with Our Lady" were somehow in danger of narcissism. As a Lutheran minister who has never had the will, much less the instruction, to develop such a "spiritual relationship" with Mary, I certainly acknowledge my own inclination to narcissism, but I hope it's no more profound and dangerous than anyone else's. The wheels sort of fell off her argument for me there. Ms. Wilson's eloquent article took it from there, and gave me, and my co-pastor, a solid theological and historical justification for our ministry here.

Thanks to FIRST THINGS for putting together such great reading.

(The Rev.) Gregory Yeager
Grafton Lutheran Church
(ELCA)
Grafton, North Dakota

What does Sarah Hinlicky Wilson's position come down to? A small argument spread thin: men and women cannot be that different, or else women would not be saved. Besides, biology agrees—not that we, as Christians, care about that sort of thing. And if my opponents are right—why then, we need women pastors all the more, so that women can have things presented from their own viewpoint. Finally: women are called to the ministry; they say so themselves. And who are you to tell them no if God is telling them yes?

Considering the possible danger to souls presented by women's ordination if it be false, surely we deserve better arguments than this; and if indeed no such better arguments exist, maybe we should just retire this is-

sue, as the Church already did long ago.

Mark Wyman
Ithaca, New York

Jennifer Ferrara and Sarah Hinlicky Wilson provide opposing views on the ordination of women. Ms. Ferrara is right, but for the wrong reasons. She makes the recently developed “iconic” argument against women priests, which claims that only a man can be a priest because the priest is an iconic representation of Christ, who was a man. Ms. Wilson refutes this incorrect reason for not ordaining women.

The two writers and your readers could benefit from reading *The Scandal of Gender* (Regina Orthodox Press, 1998), in which Patrick Mitchell concisely explicates the teaching of the Church Fathers on the proper role of men and women in the Church. Quite simply, women cannot be priests because they cannot exercise authority over men (1 Timothy 2:12), which as Mr. Mitchell points out is “the most obvious implication of the doctrine of the headship of the man.” In addition to the priesthood, the prohibition on exercising authority over men, as taught by the Church Fathers, restricts or eliminates many other roles for women, both in and outside the Church.

Andrew G. Van Sant
Annapolis, Maryland

I was enthralled by the two opposing views you presented on the ordination of women. From a layperson’s perspective I found Jennifer Ferrara’s argument quite compelling, Sarah Hinlicky Wilson’s perhaps less so.

Ms. Ferrara makes more intuitive sense. She points out that according to the Bible, male and female roles differ. The male gives love; the female receives it. God established His Church in the female gender but He Himself appeared as male. So in the Catholic Church, since the priest represents Jesus, then that role can be filled only by a man.

It makes sense but it leaves a wide-open question. If Ms. Ferrara’s argument applies to the Catholic Church, then wouldn’t its correlative apply to the Protestant churches? The Protestant pastor represents not Jesus but his congregation—the Church. And the Church, remember, embodies the feminine—the bride. So oughtn’t the pastor as leader—as, as it were, head bride—be a woman? Wouldn’t, by Ms. Ferrara’s logic, she actually be mandated to be?

I’m not trying to challenge Ms. Ferrara. If the answer is yes, it’s fine with me. But it’s a radical notion and I wonder if she’d be willing to entertain it.

Patricia Coyne
Dublin, California

Jennifer Ferrara replies:

R. Mary Hayden Lemmons rejects the reasons I give for restricting the priesthood to men, but does not respond at all to the content of my essay. Instead, she proposes a novel thesis of her own, one for which she provides no evidence from Scripture or tradition.

I am unaware of any basis for her claim that Jesus was on a gender mission to restore the heterosexual unity destroyed by original sin. True, men’s dominion over women is a result of the fall, but men and women continue to be united in marriage. By God’s grace received through the sacraments, husbands and wives can be equal partners in a marriage based upon a radical giving of self on the part of both spouses, a giving that results in mutual submission. However, the roles of men and women are not the same, but complementary. This diversity within unity lies at the heart of the nuptial mystery proclaimed throughout Scripture. For instance, Ephesians 5:21-33 says that New Covenant wives are to be subject in everything to their husbands as the Church is subject to Christ, while husbands are to sacrifice themselves for their wives as Christ did for the Church. The priest is a symbol of the

gift of Christ’s love for his bride, the Church.

Prof. Lemmons ignores this beautiful imagery and instead, using sterile words that could only emanate from the academy, says the priest “images Christ in his gender mission.” In the end, her own rationale suggests it might be time to ordain women. If Christ has been on a gender mission to overcome the effects of chauvinism, he has been largely successful in Western democracies, at least. Certainly, priests no longer need to be male in order to be taken seriously as rulers and managers of the Church. Those who recognize the God-given inherent differences between men and women and their importance for the Church and society will want to reject Prof. Lemmons’ arguments and stick with the traditional teachings of the Church.

Pastor Gregory Yeager says he followed me up to the point where I said Roman Catholic priests who avoid having a relationship with Mary run the risk of becoming narcissistic. Let me clarify: I did not have Protestant pastors in mind when I made the statement. I was addressing the problem of celibate priests who are in danger of leading lives divorced from the feminine. The crux of the argument is that men and women have a symbiotic relationship: men learn how to become receptive, and therefore holy, from women. However, if Pastor Yeager was indeed with me up to that point, I would think he would be eager to partake in the characteristically feminine, self-giving receptivity of the Marian *fiat* (“Let it be done to me according to your Word.”), which lies at the heart of a spiritual relationship with her.

Since Andrew Van Sant was kind enough to recommend a book to me, I wish to return the favor and suggest he read Manfred Hauke’s comprehensive *Women in the Priesthood?* (Ignatius, 1988). If he does, he will see that the iconic argument for the male priesthood is neither recently developed nor without substantial witness

from Christian authors of both the patristic and medieval periods, including those of Eastern Orthodox lineage.

With regard to Patricia Coyne's interesting proposal, perhaps she does not know that the Catholic priest also acts in the person of the Church, that is, as representative of the whole Church, but he does so, as *Inter Insignores* observes, only "precisely because he first represents Christ, himself, who is the Head and Shepherd of the Church." Protestant pastors, however, do not claim to represent either Christ or their churches in this sacramental way.

Sarah Hinlicky Wilson replies:

The exchange of articles with Jennifer Ferrara, and now of letters with readers, has been for me a most instructive exploration into the nature of debate.

First, a few specific responses. Mark Chance, Father Matthew Kowalski, and Gil Costello criticize me for not accepting Roman Catholic anthropology or sacramentology. For that I offer no apology. I would like to note that I do indeed think that Jesus' maleness has theological significance, but that is another article. June McIntosh and R. Mary Hayden Lemmons present midrashic interpretations of Christ's masculinity, which, though interesting in their own way, are otherwise unfounded in Scripture and tradition. Mark Wyman caricatures my argument in misleading ways that would be tedious to enumerate. Pastor Peter Speckhard complains because I did not write the article he wanted—one that is primarily scriptural in nature. This is for the simple fact that I was writing in response to Ms. Ferrara, herself a Roman Catholic, and as the letters from other Roman Catholics amply demonstrate, they are overwhelmingly more interested in questions of gender ontology than scriptural warrant. I certainly could provide a scriptural case for the ordination of women, but it

would not be convincing to such a reader, since I, like Martin Luther, am not a scriptural inerrantist.

Of course, these brief rejoinders will persuade no one who was not already persuaded by the initial article, which raises (to me) the more interesting question: What makes an argument persuasive? And who is allowed to debate? Note the following features of these letters. I am charged with making bald assertions, and yet refuted with further bald assertions. I am labeled a Gnostic despite the fact that I argue for a flesh-and-blood biology instead of an ethereal ontology of gender. Because I discuss the nature of ordination, I am indicted for treating it as "an invention of the Church, which can be remade as desired." Indeed, for engaging in a theological argument at all, I am accused of being a "liberal Protestant" who puts her own judgments above Scripture, tradition, pope, and council. My simple request for charity is treated as a shameless play for cheap grace, and the philosophical principle of charity in debate—presuming the best in one's opponents' arguments rather than the worst—is handily ignored by my respondents.

All I have done is amass arguments from Scripture, tradition, and plain reason regarding the ordination of women. That is what theology is and does. Any doctrine to which the Church holds was not handed down from on high, pristine and complete, but was developed and debated by the Church's theologians over centuries. True doctrine stands up to genuine challenges. Here, however, I have encountered no meaningful response to either the trinitarian or the Christological arguments, and the responses about gender only further support my thesis that unclear thinking and mystical befuddlement surround the issue. So did I cause offense by the content of my argument, or by the fact that I made the argument at all?

I presume no greater certainty about the validity of ordaining

women than the risk of faith allows. I'm with Gamaliel on this one: "If this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them" (Acts 5:38-39).

Faith and the Founding

I am writing to compliment Michael Novak for his excellent article, "The Faith of the Founding" (April). Mr. Novak rightly recognizes that the writings of some of the early American republic's most famous deists actually "owe their derivation to a Jewish and Christian worldview, and do not spring from any other." However, along with the "official" documents of George Mason, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, there exist the "unofficial" writings of another Virginian who falls into Mr. Novak's category of the deist with a Christian worldview: George Washington. Washington, always a churchgoer but never a communicant, was among those who often spoke of the "great Ruler of events," but never of Jesus Christ. He attributed to this "Ruler" "wisdom & goodness," and he believed that "we may safely trust . . . him, without perplexing ourselves to seek for that which is beyond the human ken, only taking care to perform the parts assigned to us, in a way that reason & our own consciences approve of" (Washington to David Humphreys, March 23, 1793, National Archives).

Washington viewed organized religion as a critical pillar of society and the public order, and he demonstrated this opinion by supporting a variety of churches and denominations. At the same time, he generally opposed any state support of religious institutions. In October 1785 Mason gave Washington the opportunity to support Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance against Virginia's assessment law. Mason sent Washington a copy of the Memorial: "If upon Consideration, You approve of the Arguments, & the principles on which

they are founded, Your Signature will both give the Remonstrance weight, and do it Honour" (Mason to Washington, October 2, 1785, Library of Congress).

But Washington confessed "that I am not amongst the number of those who are so much alarmed at the thoughts of making people pay towards the support of that which they profess, if of the denominations of Christians; or declare themselves Jews, Mahomitans or otherwise, & thereby obtain proper relief." He opposed the assessment law not out of principle, but because "there is a decided majority for it, to the disgust of a respectable minority." In other words, Washington found little distasteful about the bill itself. What he disliked was the agitation caused by it. He wanted the return of "quiet to the State" (Washington to Mason, October 3, 1785, Library of Congress). Having written these brief remarks, Washington said nothing more to Mason about Madison's Memorial and returned it unsigned.

Throughout his life, Washington made a conscious effort to avoid actions that might anger Virginia's clergy or adversely affect Christianity and Judaism. In Washington's view, the potential damage to the social order from Madison's radical deism was not worth the risk. He recognized more than some of his contemporaries in the founding generation that one did not need to be a communicant or believe in the resurrection to benefit from living in a society based on Christian principles. Perhaps this is why Washington did not sign the document, perhaps not. Maybe he did not want to express his opinion publicly on so inflammatory an issue. What we know for sure is that Madison did not admit publicly to the writing of his own Memorial until 1826.

John C. Pinheiro
Assistant Professor and
Assistant Editor
Papers of George Washington
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

Michael Novak's thoughtful analysis of "The Faith of the Founding" made one very significant error. He asserts that "only Judaism and Christianity . . . nourish and celebrate the three central concepts necessary to the American conception of rights. . . . Only they had the doctrine that there is a creator . . . ; that each individual owes a personal accounting at the time of Judgment to this Creator . . . ; and that this inalienable relation between each individual and his Creator occurs in the depths of conscience and reason, and is not reached merely by external bows, bended knees, pilgrimages, and other religious observances."

Mr. Novak believes that the third of these three concepts is not found in Islam. This is not the case. Allow me to quote one *hadith* as evidence that for Muslims a very appropriate emphasis on the intention behind the ritual is the key to the appropriateness of the ritual. This *hadith* is found in the *Forty Hadith* of An-Nawawi:

On the authority of the Commander of the faithful, Abu Haf's 'Umar ibn al-Khattab who said: I heard the messenger of Allah say: actions are but by intention and every man shall have but that which he intended. Thus he whose migration was for Allah and His messenger, his migration was for Allah and His messenger, but he whose migration was to achieve some world benefit or to take some woman in marriage, his migration was for that for which he migrated.

At Hartford Seminary 18 percent of our students are Muslim: when I speak to them about the significance of ritual prayer, they understand entirely the importance of one's conscience before God as a necessary condition for effective prayer.

Ian Markham
Dean and Professor of Theology
and Ethics
Hartford Seminary
Hartford, Connecticut

Michael Novak replies:

I am very grateful for both these letters, though for different reasons. Warmest thanks to John C. Pinheiro, Assistant Editor of the papers of George Washington, for the fascinating details he adds to the story of Washington's religion and especially to Washington's actions regarding Madison's "Remonstrance." For me personally his letter could not have been more welcome, since I am just starting on a brief book on the religion of George Washington, at the request of the Executive Director of Historic Mount Vernon, James C. Rees. I would much appreciate guidance and suggestions from the readers of FIRST THINGS, who can reach me at mnovak@aei.org. And I hereby warn Professor Pinheiro that, since no good deed goes unpunished, he can expect in due time an urgent call from me requesting his counsel and assistance.

Meanwhile, Professor Ian Markham also does me the service of pointing out an error in my article, in the misleading language I employed for the point I really wanted to make. I can see how he interpreted my passage on the concept that "the inalienable relation between each individual and his Creator occurs in the depths of conscience and reason" in the light of inner intention. But that was not precisely the point I was aiming at, and I see now what I should have written. Had I had at hand the *hadith* Professor Markham brings forward, I could have explicitly allowed for his recognition of the Muslim emphasis on conscience and intention in religious prayer and action, and then gone further.

If such intentionality is crucial to the Creator, then what *political principle* follows? More than any who went before them, the Americans grasped the further conclusion that that bond of spirit between the Creator Who is "Spirit and Truth" and the creature who comes to Him in spirit and in truth is the ground of a new step forward in "the new science of politics."

For it undergirds a fresh recognition by the state of the religious liberty of every person—even Muslims, Buddhists, and atheists, whose commitments the American majority did not then share. Neither the state nor any other person can enter into that sacred space between Creator and individual rational creature. The state declares itself incompetent to step into the path of that relation. Therefore, the religious liberty of the individual must be inviolably respected, by the state and by others, whether or not it meets the standards to which others pledge their fealty.

If Prof. Markham means to imply, further, that his Muslim students can build an argument from the importance of conscience in ritual prayer to a declaration of religious liberty by Muslim states, I would rejoice exceedingly. I believe strongly that such an argument must be possible, based on its available origins in Muslim doctrine about reward and punishment, and about intention. However, in my ignorance of Muslim thought, I do not know of any writer in the Muslim tradition who has made that argument on a religious basis. As editor (with Brian Anderson) of a series of books on religion and politics for Lexington Books, I would be most happy to welcome for possible publication manuscripts that make such an argument.

Animal Rights and Wrongs

Richard John Neuhaus is to be commended for the respect he pays to Matthew Scully's new book *Dominion* and the call therein to examine the rightness of our raising animals for food ("Wild Moralists in the Animal Kingdom," Public Square, April). The huge industrial farms that provide nearly all animal-based foods today inflict pain on the weakest of creation through castration, debeaking, and tail-docking without anesthesia. Furthermore, factory farming systems frustrate every God-given drive in these innocent animals: chickens can neither spread their wings nor estab-

lish a pecking order, while piglets and calves are weaned quickly, if not immediately removed from their mothers. Artificial insemination rules on today's farms; natural reproduction is prevented by the quest for efficiency and profit and the hormone-saturated, artificially enlarged bodies these industries create.

Father Neuhaus, Mr. Scully, and all Christians are right to conclude that these practices constitute the wrong answer to God's entrustment of the care of His creatures to humanity. We are called by God to treat with love and mercy the animals that, by their mere existence, bless and give Him glory. Responding to that call should begin each time we sit down to eat. Adopting a vegetarian diet, as Mr. Scully himself has, meets the biblical demand for just environmental stewardship and follows Christ's precedent of ministering to the exploited. This choice for nonviolence and kindness, against cruelty and the "might makes right" mentality, is a most practicable means for alleviating an average of ninety-two animals each year of the sorry "existence" that factory farms entail.

Readers interested in receiving a free pamphlet about Christianity and vegetarianism by Fr. John Dear, S.J., can contact catholicvegsgociety@hotmail.com.

Daniel Paden

Director
Catholic Vegetarian Society
Norfolk, Virginia

The following is commentary on Jewish ritual slaughter, or *Shechitah*, by Dr. J. H. Hertz, former Chief Rabbi of what was then the British Empire. The commentary is taken from a 1941 Metzudah edition of the "Pentateuch and Haftorahs." It is remarkable both for the dark time in history in which it was written, and for its adumbration of the current European Union attitude toward this ancient practice.

As is well known, the rabbinical

regulations concerning *Shechitah*, the Jewish mode of slaughtering animals intended for food, are in part due to a desire to prevent the slightest unnecessary suffering to the animal. "Since the need of procuring food necessitates the slaying of animals, the Law enjoins that the death of the animal should be the easiest. It is not allowed to torment the animal by cutting the throat in a clumsy manner, by pole-axing, or by cutting off a limb while the animal is still alive." (Maimonides)

The Jewish method of slaughter is one continuous cut with the sharpest of knives, applied by a skilled operator. Such cut severs all the great blood vessels of the neck, and produces instantaneous insensibility in the animal. Professor C. Lovatt Evans, a leading physiologist, declares: "I should be happy to think that my own end were likely to be as swift and painless as the end of these cattle killed in this way undoubtedly is." Similar opinions in regard to *Shechitah* have been given over the years by a large number of non-Jewish professors of physiology and veterinary surgeons in the principal European countries. While *Shechitah* is prohibited in enlightened lands like Switzerland and Norway, this is due to ignorance on the part of the electorate as to what the Jewish method of slaughter actually is. In Nazi Germany such prohibition was enacted not so much out of sympathy with the beast, as out of a desire to inflict pain on human beings: "They sacrifice men, and kiss calves" (Hosea 13:2).

While I think much of the attitudes of the so-called "animal rights" movement can be chalked up to ignorance, I'm afraid that some who should know better, such as Peter Singer, "kiss calves" while advocating the slaughter of innocent children, both born and unborn.

Gary Inbinder
Woodland Hills, California

Creating a Christian Culture

In the Public Square (February) Richard John Neuhaus comments on the research of Dean R. Hoge on young adult Catholics and their weak grasp of Catholic doctrine and of Catholicism as a “comprehensive way of life.” Father Neuhaus correctly identifies much of that weakness as rooted in inadequate teaching and in an absence of the experience of Catholicism as a “tight-knit cultural system.”

These problems of course extend to all denominations, but only evangelical Protestants have faced up to the full scope of the problem and have addressed it in the thorough way that is needed.

Most people do not relate strongly to abstract ideas; instead their view of reality comes from direct experience and from the people they associate with and the culture they live in. From the days of Constantine in the fourth century A.D. up to the twentieth century, Christians lived in a Christian culture. If they went to school or university, the school and university reflected Christian values. Their family was Christian, their neighbors were Christians, any book they were likely to read was based on Christian ideas. This was still true for Roman Catholics up until the 1950s. Virtually overnight, almost all that changed.

Now young people with Roman Catholic parents mostly go to a public school and college where they meet with active hostility to Christian ideas and values. It is hardly an exaggeration to describe many of these educational institutions as pagan in culture. Through much of their childhood and adult life these young people will read newspapers, watch television, and listen to radio that again promote ideas and values hostile to Christianity. In all likelihood many of their friends and coworkers will be of at least another Christian denomination, if not from a home that is agnostic or atheist. Many of

these young Catholics will marry someone who is not Catholic.

It is therefore not surprising that for young people under such an onslaught, faith weakens and their ability to apply their faith to their lives atrophies. Such a situation will not be reversed by one hour on Sunday attending Mass and listening to a ten-minute homily.

Evangelical Protestants have met this problem head on. They have set out deliberately to develop a Christian culture and worldview in their members through “small-group ministries.” Members of their congregations are encouraged, if not pressured, to join one or another small group in the church. Typically such a small group will be made up of people like themselves—young parents with young parents; young single adults with other young single adults. These groups meet weekly for socializing, for study, and for prayer. They study the Bible or basic Christian teaching and discuss how to apply the teachings. As a result they are not only exposed to Christian teaching, they are forced to grapple with its meaning in their lives. Just as important, gradually they acquire friends who hold Christian beliefs and values. One of the best descriptions of such a congregation is given in Rick Warren’s *The Purpose-Driven Church*.

With such a strong foundation the evangelical churches can aggressively promote Christian values and insist that their members subscribe to them. They do this not only through sermons, but through radio ministries addressing the felt needs of listeners, through conferences, and the like. And they insist that Christian colleges live up to their name.

The Roman Catholic Church could learn from the evangelical experience, but we need to recognize that we are back in the days of the early Church where the mission frontier begins at the front door of the parish, not in some far-distant country. It also requires swimming

against the dominant culture, not coming to uneasy terms with it, as some church leaders are tempted to do. Developing a Christian culture for members, particularly the critical group of young, single adults and married couples with young children, is not easy. Initiatives such as small-group ministries are not easy to start and maintain and they take a lot of money. But it is to be feared that without such an effort, in a culture like ours, we may indeed discover before long that our Catholic capital is exhausted and that “it is simply too late.”

Sheena Pappalardo
Natick, Massachusetts

Not an Apostate

I do not blame anyone for concluding from what purported to be the text of a 1999 PBS *Frontline* interview with me that I had apostatized from the Christian faith (While We’re At It, Public Square, May). But I wish that before speculating publicly and damagingly about the long-standing fragility of my faith, Richard John Neuhaus had paused the length of an e-mail to check whether I acknowledged as mine sentiments so radically at odds with everything I have ever written. In fact the so-called “transcript,” posted on the Internet without my knowledge and never vetted by me, grossly misrepresents me, attributing to me views that I emphatically do not hold. The *Frontline* website conflated my genuine interview, a purely historical assessment of the pontificate of John Paul II, with that of a so far unidentified northern European interviewee, speaking in an imperfect English that is evident even in the transcript. All the passages on the website denying the resurrection and other Christian truths quoted in the Public Square piece came from this man’s interview, and not from mine.

In the wake of your notice, and the flood of bewildered and in many cases distressing correspondence to

which it has given rise, I of course contacted PBS, and asked for an unedited videotape of the interview: the appalling error then emerged. PBS has acknowledged its mistake, it has removed the offending part of the interview from the website, and it has posted there an unqualified apology to me.

Father Neuhaus' comment hinted that my supposed apostasy helped explain an otherwise puzzling "hostility" in my work to the present Pope and to Pope Paul VI. I have on occasions expressed reservations about the exercise of authority in the present pontificate: that is one of the jobs of a historian, and part of the service a Catholic historian offers the Church. Reasoned criticism from within the household of faith is not the same as hostility. We are members of a family, not troops in an army, forbidden to criticize our officers. Justice and charity require us to do the best we

can to respect and support our pastors: that doesn't oblige us to credit them with impeccability or unfailing wisdom. Popes, like other people, sometimes make bad decisions, and supporting them sometimes means saying so honestly.

But I am in any case amazed that anyone should think me "hostile" to Pope Paul VI. The portrait of Papa Montini offered in my history of the popes was written with love and profound sympathy for a great man, heroically seeking the will of God in an impossible situation. Anyone who looks again at the text will see that I say so.

Eamon Duffy
Cambridge University
Cambridge, England

RJN replies:

There was no reason to doubt the authenticity of the document published by PBS as an interview with

Eamon Duffy, professor of history at Cambridge. I did not know Prof. Duffy personally, and people sometimes do say surprising things about what they do and do not believe. Certainly the item was worthy of note. I am, of course, very pleased to learn that Prof. Duffy did not say what PBS represented him as saying. Regarding his history of the popes, *Saints and Sinners*, Duffy is hostile to John Paul II (he tells me a new edition is more sympathetic to the current pontiff), but his letter prompted me to read again his section on Paul VI, and he is right. He depicts Montini as "frightened," "reserved, prone to fits of depression, easily hurt," but also as a man who did his best under extremely difficult circumstances. I repeat what I wrote in the May issue: "Eamon Duffy is a historian of great talents, with a gift for illuminating unsuspected aspects of the past."

Ave Maria

When we were born, our awestruck mother smiled.
God gave her love to give the wondering child.
And later, seeing such a little one,
We feel her endless grace and pass it on.

Robert Greer Cohn

Opinion

Harvard Springtime

Bronwen Catherine McShea

On Sunday, April 27, one of the large lecture halls at Harvard Divinity School was two-thirds filled primarily with graying, upper-middle-class liberal women of the baby-boom generation who had come to hear and applaud Dr. Ida Raming's "courageous" story of resisting the all-male hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. Raming, you may recall, is one of seven women, mostly German and Austrian, who were excommunicated in summer 2002 for participating in an illicit ordination ceremony. She celebrated a liturgy at Harvard, kindling the activist fires in her supportive listeners, who are working to "liberate" women from the Roman "structures of power" that have discriminated against them these long twenty centuries.

One expects such fare at Harvard. It was not twenty-four hours earlier, however, that Richard John Neuhaus addressed a crowd three times as large at the nearby Harvard Law School campus—a crowd consisting largely of young, conservative Catholic graduate students and professionals, evenly divided by sex, and of visibly diverse ethnic backgrounds. Here, Neuhaus elicited a standing ovation upon encouraging our generation to continue answering God's call to fight the evil of abortion in America—"the great civil rights issue of our time." He reminded us that the Catholic Church has been the voice crying out in the wilderness on this issue as on many others. His talk followed another by Father Paul McNellis of Boston College's philosophy department, who tied the abortion issue to that of sexuality, telling the sympathetic crowd that one way to fight the evil of abortion on the personal level is for young men to start living chastely out of a "courageous," "manly" protectiveness toward young women—to love their girlfriends truly and stop leading them into situations in which abortion is a temptation.

The aspirations of these two crowds could not have been more different. Since the 1960s, the first crowd has sought to seize power from the leaders of the Catholic Church, to recast the Church in the image of modern, liberal society, and to purge it of all distinc-

tions, not only between male and female, but also between priest and people, and even between mankind and God Himself. By contrast, the second crowd turns away from the moral and philosophical confusions of the sixties toward the leaders of the Church—particularly toward a Pope who asserts without blushing his divinely ordained authority to define what is right and wrong. They embrace a view of the world that has a privileged place for lasting and binding conceptions of natural and divine law, and for the traditional authorities that continue to expound such teachings despite the world's resounding rejection of them.

Having been a student at Harvard for five years—first as an undergraduate, now as a Master's candidate in religious studies—I have observed a growing chasm between the aspirations of the generation that is teaching us and those of more and more of my peers who are returning not merely to traditional ways of thinking, but in a remarkable number of cases, to the orthodox Christianity many of their parents rejected in their youth. While it would be misleading to say that such students make up anything more than a small minority at Harvard, their numbers are undeniably growing, in large part because of their infectiously hopeful spirit.

Within my own immediate circle of friends at school, for example, there are at least a dozen who either have converted to orthodox Catholicism from other faiths or from no faith at all, or embraced such Catholicism on their own despite having been raised in lax Catholic homes. Each of them has additional friends with similar stories. Friends who have previously been students at Princeton, Yale, and elsewhere have spoken of similar phenomena on those campuses. Having been raised myself in an unusually strong Catholic home where one often felt like a member of a dying race, I have been swept off my feet these past few years by the enthusiasm of friends who have come to the faith—especially its moral teachings—despite its extremely countercultural messages.

The presence of these young, faithful Catholics was particularly evident this spring at Harvard. Student attendance has been significant at daily masses, regular Confession, and Rosary groups both at the College and at the Law School. In addition to the annual symposium on pro-life issues put on by the Harvard Society for Law, Life, and Religion, as well as the ongoing activities of the undergraduate pro-life organization, Harvard Right to Life, Catholic students at Harvard have benefited from discussion groups on Thomas Aquinas, natural law, and the women doctors of the Church. Participants in these

groups confidently and cheerfully embrace orthodoxy and the teachings of the Magisterium.

Moreover, a graduate and professional student Bible study group has sprung up; every week fifteen to twenty students gather to discuss the gospel and to integrate it with insights drawn from Pope John Paul II's encyclicals, writings of the doctors of the Church, and lessons from the Church Fathers. Perhaps the most public and successful event was the coming of a "Theology on Tap" series to a bar in Harvard Square, where large numbers of young people in the area gathered regularly to hear informal but very well-informed and inspirational talks by orthodox Catholic priests and laymen. The series will be returning to Cambridge this fall.

What I find particularly striking about many of my peers in this veritable young Catholic movement at Harvard—particularly the young women among them—is their fervent rejection of modern liberal conceptions of sexual difference, sexual relations, and family life. They are familiar with Pope John Paul II's "Theology of the Body," for example, and embrace warmly the message of encyclicals such as *Evangelium Vitae* and *Humanae Vitae*. They also support the Church's stance that women cannot be ordained as priests, seeing in it a recognition that men and women—having distinct natures, body and soul, and complementing one other in a way that reflects a higher theological reality—ought to continue to have separate roles within the life of the Church.

To flesh out further the countercultural intellectual orientation of some of these young women, it is useful to point out the popularity among them of Professors Mary Ann Glendon of Harvard Law School and Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. of the Harvard government department. Glendon, a member of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, has been an outstanding inspiration for these women, who are looking to role models who combine success with faithful Catholicism. Mansfield (who is not himself Catholic) has been awakening students for decades to premodern, particularly Aristotelian views of natural right, and he is currently making waves in academe, particularly among feminists, with a project on manliness, arguing that the social and philosophical reality of sexual differences may be more fundamental than our officially gender-blind society allows itself to see.

The more cynical of the older women who attended Ida Raming's talk at Harvard Divinity School would probably trace my opinions to the subtle enslavement of our sex by men (chief among them the charismatic Pope John Paul II). Yet I and many of my peers can only shake our heads in wonder at the blindness of so many in the sixties' generation to the *beauty* of orthodoxy. This beauty is particularly apparent to us in the Church's teachings on sexuality: these teachings seem to express a sublime reality that we catch glimpses of in our own lives—in observing and relating to young men, and in our continual journey with Jesus Christ toward God the Father. Human masculinity and femininity have their own loveliness in relation to one another, reflecting the mystical romance between Christ and his Church. To ordain women to the priesthood—to robe them in the trappings of those who truly act *in persona Christi* in the sacramental life of the Church—seems to us to upset the harmonious order of the universe at which we have learned to gaze in wonder, despite all the obstacles to such visions presented by our dreary modern world. Likewise, we are learning to see again the beauty of marriage conceived as a sacrament, and openness to new life within marriage as the due thanks we must give to God for the privilege He grants us to participate in His creative power through procreation.

My generation is increasingly catching glimpses of the beauty of a society that is committed in spirit and in law to a culture of life, which is why we are turning against abortion. There is no turning back when one beholds such beauty—when one falls in love with God's will for the human family. We recognize the struggles that accompany acting upon a commitment to His will, but such struggles appeal to the idealistic impulses of youth. They are hurdles to be scaled, not avoided.

These are exciting times for the Catholic Church in America, as the eventful April weekend at Harvard proved to me and my friends in abundance. There is a generational struggle afoot, and it is not at all what the 1960s generation would have predicted it would be. Young men and women are turning to the ancient wisdom of the Church—even at Harvard University.

Bronwen Catherine McShea is a Master of Theological Studies candidate at Harvard Divinity School and a 2002 graduate of Harvard College.

True and False Reform

Avery Cardinal Dulles

The long experience of the Catholic Church has included many seasons of decline and renewal. Throughout the centuries the Church has striven by preaching and exhortation to help individual Christians reform their lives. At various times reformers have arisen to make the consecrated life a more authentic school of perfection. One thinks in this connection of the Cistercians and Trappists as reformed branches of the Benedictine order; and of the Discalced Carmelites, who conducted a thoroughgoing reform of their order in sixteenth-century Spain. The universal Church likewise has undertaken major institutional reforms; for example, the Gregorian Reform of the eleventh century, which imposed stricter discipline on the clergy and secured the independence of the Church from secular control.

At many times in her history the Church has been threatened by false reforms that, if accepted, would have denatured her. Such reforms were attempted by the Encratites in the second century, the Donatists in the fourth century, the Waldensians in the twelfth, the Spiritual Franciscans in the thirteenth, Wycliffe in the fourteenth, and Jan Hus in the fifteenth.

The Conciliar movement in the fifteenth century brought forth some good fruits but came to a bad end at the Council of Basel. Attempting to convert the Church into a kind of constitutional monarchy, it ran afoul of the Catholic doctrine of papal primacy.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century the necessity of a thoroughgoing reform was generally recognized. After the failure of the Fifth Lateran Council to achieve this objective, the whole Church teemed with reform movements, notably among Christian human-

ists such as Desiderius Erasmus, John Colet, and Thomas More. Catholic cardinals such as Gaspar Contarini, James Sadoletto, Reginald Pole, and John Peter Caraffa proposed timely reforms some years before the Council of Trent. Luther and his colleagues also took up the theme of reform, but in the name of correcting abuses they attacked essentials of the Catholic faith and became separated from the Church. The reform decrees of Trent targeted some of the real abuses and continued to bear excellent fruits long after the Council. But in the next few centuries, the term "reform" became suspect among Catholics because it seemed to have a Protestant ring.

The First Vatican Council ran counter to certain reform movements of the nineteenth century. It successfully eliminated the remnants of the Conciliar Movement and crushed ecclesiastical nationalism in the form of Gallicanism and its counterparts in several nations. As a result, the papacy maintained uncontested control of the Catholic Church through the middle of the twentieth century.

During the decade after World War II, the Church in Europe, especially in France, experienced a revitalization thanks to a number of movements that may be grouped under the heading of *ressourcement*. The Second Vatican Council was able to build effectively on the revival of biblical and patristic studies, the liturgical movement, kerygmatic theology, the catechetical renewal, the lay apostolate, the ecumenical movement, and the social apostolate. Aware of the negative connotations of terms like "reformation," Vatican II used such language very sparingly, but did not shrink from implementing some of the desiderata of Luther and the early Protestants.

Fearing that the term "reform" had too negative a connotation, the Council spoke by preference of purification and renewal (*renovatio*). The Constitu-

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tion on the Church, for example, declared: "The Church, embracing sinners in her bosom, is at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, and incessantly pursues the path of penance and renewal" (*Lumen Gentium* 8).

In one passage Vatican II spoke explicitly though very guardedly of ecclesial reform. This passage, in the Decree on Ecumenism, touches not only on personal but also on institutional reform:

Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she is always in need insofar as she is an institution of men here on earth. Therefore, if the influence of events or of the times has led to deficiencies in conduct, in Church discipline, or even in the formulation of doctrine (which must be carefully distinguished from the deposit itself of faith), these should be appropriately rectified at the proper moment. (*Unitatis Redintegratio* 6)

This passage is, as I have noted, very cautiously phrased. In stating that the Church is subject to reform to the extent that it is a human institution, it implies the presence of a divine element that is not subject to reform. It rules out any attempt to reform the deposit of faith.

Since Vatican II reform movements have proliferated, but some of them have been ambiguous or misconceived. On the left we find initiatives that seek to make the Church more tolerant, more liberal, and more democratic. Some progressivist reformers aim to dissolve the Church's hierarchical structure and transform her into an egalitarian democracy. Bishops have now and again criticized or condemned liberalizing groups such as the "We Are Church" movement, which originated in Austria, and the "Call to Action" here in the United States.

Moderately to the right are orthodox but intransigent theologians who aspire to "reform the reforms" introduced in the wake of Vatican II. At the extreme right the Church is confronted by movements that seek to undo the work of the Council itself, restoring what they venerate as Tridentine Catholicism. The Holy See has condemned the reactionary traditionalism of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. His breakaway church and a variety of so-called *Sedevacantist* movements are certainly schismatic if not openly heretical.

In order to make a sound evaluation of reform movements, it will be helpful to unpack the concept of reform itself. To reform is to give new and better form to a preexistent reality, while preserving the essentials. Unlike innovation, reform implies organic continuity; it does not add something foreign or extrinsic. Unlike

revolution or transformation, reform respects and retains the substance that was previously there. Unlike development, it implies that something has gone wrong and needs to be corrected. The point of departure for reform is always an idea or institution that is affirmed but considered to have been imperfectly or defectively realized. The goal is to make persons or institutions more faithful to an ideal already accepted.

Reform may be either restorative or progressive. Restorative reform seeks to reactualize a better past or a past that is idealized. Progressive reform aims to move ahead toward an ideal or utopian future. Either style can run to excess. Restorative reform tends toward traditionalism; progressive reform, toward modernism. But neither direction can be ruled out. Sometimes the past needs to be repristinated; at other times, it may need to be transcended.

In any discussion of reform, two opposite errors are to be avoided. The first is to assume that because the Church is divinely instituted, it never needs to be reformed. This position is erroneous because it fails to attend to the human element. Since all the members of the Church, including the Pope and the bishops, are limited in virtue and ability, they may fail to live up to the principles of the faith itself. When guilty of negligence, timidity, or misjudgment, they may need to be corrected, as Paul, for example, corrected Peter (Galatians 2:11).

The second error would be to assail or undermine the essentials of Catholic Christianity. This would not be reform but dissolution. Paul rebuked the Galatians for turning to a different gospel (1:6). The Catholic Church is unconditionally bound to her Scriptures, her creeds, her dogmas, and her divinely instituted hierarchical office and sacramental worship. To propose that the Church should deny the divinity of Christ, or retract the dogma of papal infallibility, or convert herself into a religious democracy, as some have done in the name of reform, is to misunderstand both the nature of Catholicism and the nature of reform.

Anyone seeking to reform the Church must share the Church's faith and accept the essentials of her mission. The Church cannot take seriously the reforms advocated by those who deny that Christ was Son of God and Redeemer, who assert that the Scriptures teach error, or who hold that the Church should not require orthodoxy on the part of her members. Proposals coming from a perspective alien to Christian faith should be treated with the utmost suspicion if not dismissed as unworthy of consideration.

The Church must be herself, and must not strive to become what nonbelievers might like her to be. Her first responsibility is to preserve intact the revelation and the means of grace that have been entrusted to her. Her second responsibility is to transmit the faith in its

purity and make it operative in the lives of her members. Her third responsibility is to help persons who are not yet her members, and human society as a whole, to benefit from the redemptive work of Christ.

More than a decade before Vatican II the French Dominican Yves Congar wrote a book with the title *True and False Reform in the Church*. The work was considered controversial in its day, but has, I think, been vindicated as thoroughly orthodox. It is still in my opinion the most searching theological treatise on our subject. Drawing to some degree on Congar's fine exploratory work, I should like to suggest a number of principles by which reform proposals in our day might be assessed.

1) According to Congar, "the great law of a Catholic reformism will be to begin with a return to the principles of Catholicism." Vatican II, echoing his words, taught that "every renewal of the Church essentially consists in an increase of fidelity to her own calling" (*UR* 6).

Catholicism derives its principles from God by way of revelation. The most authoritative guidance comes from Holy Scripture understood in the light of apostolic tradition, inasmuch as this is the normative channel whereby revelation is transmitted. In his reform of the liturgy, Pius X issued a call to return to the sources (*Revertimini ad fontes*). Pius XII declared that speculation becomes sterile if it neglects to return continually to the sacred sources of Scripture and tradition, which contain inexhaustible treasures of truth.

2) Any reform conducted in the Catholic spirit will respect the Church's styles of worship and pastoral life. It will be content to operate within the Church's spiritual and devotional heritage, with due regard for her Marian piety, her devotion to the saints, her high regard for the monastic life and the vows of religion, her penitential practices, and her eucharistic worship. A truly Catholic reform will not fanatically insist on the sheer logic of an intellectual system but will take account of concrete possibilities of the situation, seeking to work within the framework of the given.

3) A genuinely Catholic reform will adhere to the fullness of Catholic doctrine, including not only the dogmatic definitions of popes and councils, but doctrines constantly and universally held as matters pertaining to the faith. In this connection cognizance will be taken of the distinction made by Vatican II between the deposit of faith and the formulations of doctrine. Because human thought and language are inevitably affected by cultural and historical factors, it may be necessary from time to time to adjust the language in which the faith has been proclaimed. Repeated in a new situation, the old formulations can often be misleading, as instanced by the examples of Baius and Jansenius in the seventeenth century. These scholars quoted Augustine to the

letter but did not take account of the changed meaning of his words.

4) True reform will respect the divinely given structures of the Church, including the differences of states of life and vocations. Not all are equipped by training and office to pronounce on the compatibility of new theories and opinions with the Church's faith. This function is, in fact, reserved to the hierarchical magisterium, though the advice of theologians and others will normally be sought.

5) A reform that is Catholic in spirit will seek to maintain communion with the whole body of the Church, and will avoid anything savoring of schism or factionalism. St. Paul speaks of anger, dissension, and party spirit as contrary to the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:20). To be Catholic is precisely to see oneself as part of a larger whole, to be inserted in the Church universal.

6) Reformers will have to exercise the virtue of patience, often accepting delays. Congar finds Luther especially lacking in this virtue. But even Luther, stubborn and unyielding though he often was, cautioned his disciple Andreas Karlstadt on the importance of proceeding slowly, so as not to offend simple believers who were unprepared for changes that were objectively warranted. Prudent reformers will recognize that they themselves stand under correction, and that their proposals, even if valid, may be premature. As Newman reminded his readers, there is such a thing as a good idea whose time has not yet come. Depending on the circumstances, Church authorities may wisely delay its acceptance until people's imaginations become accustomed to the innovation.

7) As a negative criterion, I would suggest that a valid reform must not yield to the tendencies of our fallen nature, but must rather resist them. Under color of reform, we are sometimes tempted to promote what flatters our pride and feeds our self-interest, even though the gospel counsels humility and renunciation. Persons who have prestige, influence, and power usually want to retain and increase these; those who lack them want to acquire them. Both groups must undergo conversion.

8) For similar reasons we must be on guard against purported reforms that are aligned with the prevailing tendencies in secular society. One thinks in this connection of the enormous harm done in early modern times by nationalism in religion, a major factor contributing to the divisions of the Reformation era and to the enfeeblement of the Catholic Church during the Enlightenment. The liturgical and organizational reforms of Joseph II in Austria, the Civil Constitution on the Clergy enacted in France in 1790, the extreme liberalism of Félicité de Lamennais early in the nineteenth century, and the evolutionary religion of the Modernists at the dawn of the twentieth century—all these movements

afford examples of initiatives perfectly attuned to the spirit of their times but antithetical to the true character of Catholic Christianity.

In our day the prevailing climate of agnosticism, relativism, and subjectivism is frequently taken as having the kind of normative value that belongs by right to the word of God. We must energetically oppose reformers who contend that the Church must abandon her claims to absolute truth, must allow dissent from her own doctrines, and must be governed according to the principles of liberal democracy.

False reforms, I conclude, are those that fail to respect the imperatives of the gospel and the divinely given traditions and structures of the Church, or which impair ecclesial communion and tend rather toward schism. Would-be reformers often proclaim themselves to be prophets, but show their true colors by their lack of humility, their impatience, and their disregard for the Sacred Scripture and tradition.

It is often asserted that reformers ought to speak prophetically. This may well be true, provided that the nature of prophecy be correctly understood. Thomas Aquinas made an essential distinction between prophecy as it functioned in the Old Testament and as it functions within the Church. The ancient prophets, he says, were sent for two purposes: "To establish the faith and to rectify behavior." In our day, he adds, "the faith is already founded, because the things promised of old have been fulfilled in Christ. But prophecy which has as its goal to rectify behavior neither ceases nor will ever cease." Prophetism since the time of Christ, as Congar reminds us, must always be inscribed within the framework of apostolicity. "Any prophetism that would, in one way or another, look for a revelation still open to substantial accretions or admit the possibility of changes in the apostolic revelation is not true prophetism of the Church." To give in to revolutionary impulses would impoverish the Church's divinely given legacy and impair her mission to the world.

Since the Second Vatican Council ill-considered projects for institutional reform have become a consuming passion among certain intellectuals. Under the circumstances it is understandable that some excellent theologians react negatively to the very idea. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger makes an important point:

The reform that is needed at all times does not consist in constantly remodeling "our" Church according to our taste, or in inventing her ourselves, but in ceaselessly clearing away our subsidiary constructions to let in the pure light that comes from above and that is also the dawning of pure freedom.

He goes on to observe that "the more administrative machinery we construct, be it the most modern, the less place there is for the Spirit, the less place there is for the Lord, and the less freedom there is."

Henri de Lubac speaks in similar terms:

I do not believe that structural reforms, about which there has been much debate for some years, are ever the main part of a program that must aim at the only true renewal, spiritual renewal. I even fear that the present-day inflation of such projects and discussions furnishes an all-too-convenient alibi to avoid it. The conciliar formula "Ecclesia semper purificanda" seems to me as to others [e.g., Jean-Jacques von Allmen] "much superior to the 'Ecclesia semper reformanda' which is used so extensively nearly everywhere." But I do believe, on the other hand, that any disturbance, any change, or any relaxation of the essential structure of the Church would suffice to endanger all spiritual renewal.

Cardinal de Lubac is not here denying the desirability of any and all institutional reforms, but only insisting that we should not exaggerate their importance and that we always take care to leave intact the essential and abiding structures of the Church. He is surely correct in thinking that no social reorganization will be able to overcome the human tendency to sin and error. The most perfect structures, in the hands of incompetent or selfish administrators, will only make things worse. But where people are motivated by faith and generosity, even deficient structures will be tolerable.

Notwithstanding all doubts about the proper balance between personal and institutional reform, it should be clear that the Church of our day has no cause for complacency. At least here in the United States, it stands in urgent need of far-reaching intellectual, spiritual, and moral regeneration. Some of the issues to be addressed, I submit, are the following.

Religious illiteracy has sunk to a new low. We urgently need an effective program of catechesis and religious education on all levels. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is only the first step in this revival, since the renewal it stands for cannot be implemented without the formation of a corps of trained catechists and the preparation of suitable materials for the religious education of different age-groups and constituencies.

Dissent is rampant, not only on secondary and reformable teachings but even on central doctrines of the faith. Catholics should be trained to have greater confidence in the Magisterium, which enjoys a special assistance from the Holy Spirit. They should willingly conform their private judgment to its teaching, even when no dogmatic definition has been made.

The call for a new evangelization strongly issued by Paul VI and John Paul II has fallen, it would seem, on deaf ears. The majority of Catholics have little appreciation of their mission to spread the faith as a precious gift intended for all. In some cases they behave as if faith were an unwelcome burden. Members of fundamentalist churches, Mormons, and Pentecostals commonly exhibit a stronger missionary thrust than Catholics.

Liturgical laws are often flouted. The sacraments need to be celebrated with dignity and reverence. The Mass should be seen not simply as a communal meal celebrated by a local community but as the sacrifice of the universal Church performed in union with the whole body of bishops and the Bishop of Rome as its head. As Pope John Paul II reminds us in his recent encyclical, Holy Communion cannot be worthily received except by persons who are in union with the Church and free from serious sin (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 36-37; 44-45).

Religious practice is falling off. Many fail to attend Mass on Sundays. The sacrament of Penance is neglected by the vast majority of Catholics. There is a serious dearth of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life.

The immoral behavior of Catholics, both lay and clergy, is a cause of scandal and defections. Under this heading I would include not only sexual abuse of minors, which has been so extensively publicized in recent years, but sex outside of marriage, abortion, divorce, alcoholism, the use and marketing of drugs, domestic violence, defamation, and financial scandals such as falsification of records and embezzlement. The morality of Catholics all too often sinks below the standards commonly observed by Protestants and unbelievers.

Self-evidently these and similar reforms ought to be undertaken under the leadership of the bishops. Unfortunately, however, the prestige of the bishops is today at a new low. In some cases there is alienation between bishops and priests. Laity are in some places organizing against bishops and seeking to apply fiscal pressures and negative publicity as means to bring about what they see as reforms. This situation makes for new problems, likewise calling for reform. The Church cannot be made to function like a political community, with adversarial parties contending for supremacy.

Some of the alienation between different groups may result from mechanisms introduced in the wake of Vatican II. The Council exalted the episcopacy to an unprecedented peak of power and responsibility. No normal individual is capable of being at once the chief teacher, the leading mystagogue, and the principal administrator for millions of Catholics, responsible for a huge array of parishes, schools, universities, hospitals, and charitable organizations. Bishops are also expected

to be in constant consultation with pastoral councils and senates of priests. Within the diocese the bishop holds the fullness of legislative, judicial, and executive power.

In addition to their tasks within their respective dioceses, bishops are regularly engaged in the deliberations and decisions of the national episcopal conference to which they belong and in some cases have assignments from one or more of its multiple committees. A number of them are also involved in the government of the universal Church. They occasionally serve on congregations of the Holy See, and take part in synods of bishops. No wonder that there are failures in the handling of certain assignments of priests and other personnel.

According to the job description in the official documents, the bishop ought to be a man of high culture, firm in faith, solid in orthodoxy, a paragon of holiness, graciously winning in personality, able to assess the talents and weaknesses of others, skilled at managing large corporations and conducting fiscal policy, eloquent in the pulpit, fearless under criticism, indefatigable, and always self-possessed. Do we have in the United States a sufficient supply of priests with all these qualities? Many of the candidates being elevated to the episcopate, it would seem, are men of ordinary abilities, kind and hardworking, but incapable of measuring up to the almost superhuman responsibilities of the office. They run the risk of being morally, psychologically, and spiritually crushed under the burdens. As a prime structural problem, therefore, I would single out for special attention the episcopal office. What can be done to restore the priestly and pastoral ministry of bishops to its position of primacy?

In this context the relationship between clergy and laity may need some reconsideration. The distinction of roles, clearly spelled out by the Second Vatican Council, can be overstepped from both sides. Bishops, in their zeal to give explicit pastoral direction on every question and to control everything that goes on in their diocese, sometimes infringe on the proper competence of the laity, whose responsibility it is to apply the gospel to the circumstances of the marketplace, the professions, and political life. But the laity should understand that doctrinal teaching, pastoral governance, and liturgical leadership are tasks ordinarily reserved to persons in holy orders, especially the pope and bishops.

Within the Church itself, the laity have certain rights and responsibilities, as sharers by baptism in the threefold office of Christ, prophet, priest, and king. Their talents should be used for the benefit of the Church. Although the order of the Catholic Church cannot be congregational, members of the congregation can make a positive contribution, espe-

cially where their professional skills and experience are needed. There is every reason why the voice of the faithful should be heard, provided it does not come from an adversarial stance as part of a scheme to seize power.

I submit, therefore, that a great deal of thought and probably some experimentation are needed to arrive at the correct via media between clericalism and laicism. Plenty of organs for collaboration now exist: plenary councils, diocesan synods, diocesan and parish councils, and committees. New structures would not seem to be necessary. Often more is accomplished by informal consultations than by official meetings.

For the sake of successful cooperation the respective responsibilities of clergy and laity must be clearly demarcated. Whenever the functions are confused, misunderstandings, tensions, and conflict follow. Successful cooperation might help to reduce the excessive load of responsibility that now weighs upon bishops.

The idea of reform is as old as Christianity itself. Reform is by definition a good thing, and frequently is needed both on the personal and on the institutional level. But history teaches that reform can be misconceived and indiscreet. The only kind of reform that the Church should consider is one based on authentically Christian and Catholic principles. Holy Scripture and Catholic tradition give the necessary parameters. All who propose ecclesial reform should make it clear at the outset that they sincerely embrace these principles. Otherwise they should not be invited to participate in the process.

Where existing institutions prove clearly inadequate, institutional reform has a claim on our consideration. But it is less important and fruitful in the long run than personal reform, which requires purification of the heart from pride, sensuality, and lust for power. Where there is a humble and loving spirit, combined with firm faith and stringent self-discipline, institutional reform will be at once less urgent and easier to achieve. FT

Swallows

Joyously shuttling
Back and forth
Over the meadow
Swift as thoughts
Succeeding one another,
Blue-feathered weavers
Of the summer day—
We, heavy with
Memories of sin,
Watch in envy.

John McElroy

Why Remember?

Gilbert Meilaender

In the movie *Memento* (released in 2001) the central character, Leonard Shelby, sustains a blow to the head from an intruder who has already raped and killed Shelby's wife. The movie tells the story of Shelby's search to find and kill that intruder, but his search is enormously complicated by his "condition," as he calls it. The blow to the head has left him unable to form any new memories. If he discovers a clue, he will not remember it a few minutes later. He resorts to taking Polaroid snapshots of people and writing himself notes about them on the back of the picture. He tattoos reminders on his body. He learns to bluff, pretending to recognize people who look at him as if he should know them. He is aware that others might trick him, might use him for their own purposes, might even get him to kill someone whom they wanted out of the way. And, in fact, that is precisely what happens in the movie.

The irony is that even were Leonard to succeed in avenging the death of his wife, he would not remember it. And, hence, he is locked into a never-ending search, always with a sense of desperation as he attempts to find ways to remind himself of relevant details. The movie's tale is told in a way impossible to summarize—beginning, so to speak, from the end and moving step by step back to the time when Leonard was first injured. The viewer is constantly puzzled, therefore, because the viewer never knows more than Leonard does. We experience just a little of what it would be like to try to make sense of our world if we lacked the capacity to form new memories and connect them with older ones. Every morning Leonard wakes up knowing that his wife is dead, but entirely unable to remember how long this

has been true. And at certain moments we sense both the pathos and the desperation of a life that simply cannot organize events coherently because everything is always new. "How am I supposed to heal if I can't feel time?" Leonard asks.

To watch *Memento* is to be drawn into reflection about the place of memory in our sense of self and in the construction of a meaningful life. The more we enter into Leonard's desperation, the more apparent it becomes that memory is central to our understanding of what it means to live as a human being. There are mysteries here well worth pondering, even if we cannot get to the bottom of them.

In its October 2002 meeting, the President's Council on Bioethics heard from two experts in memory research (James McGaugh and Daniel Schacter) about current research on the formation of memory, attempts to enhance memory, and the possibility of blocking the formation of long-term "explicit" memory of certain events. (Explicit memory may be contrasted with implicit memory, which is the retention of certain skills, such as "how" to ride a bicycle. Explicit memory is the memory of "what," of events. Thus, Dr. McGaugh noted that it might be possible for a person suffering from Alzheimer's to remember the mechanics of playing golf while being unable to remember how many strokes he had taken on any hole.) For now, at least, it appears that we are more able to block memory than to enhance it, and we can imagine that such erasure of memory might be very appealing in certain traumatic circumstances.

Anti-anxiety drugs or beta-blockers can be used to prevent the formation of long-term memories. This is possible because, in the formation and consolidation of those memories, our emotions play a significant role. For example, the rush of adrenaline during intense

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emotional experience may help to form especially powerful memories. Because that is true, we can understand why a beta-blocker, which counteracts the effects of adrenaline, might, if administered immediately after a highly emotional experience, diminish the strength of our memory of the event.

We can imagine persons in a range of circumstances who might experience severe trauma and be likely to suffer post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)—those who've witnessed a horrible accident, soldiers in battle, a woman who has been raped, rescue workers at a disaster, a child who has seen his mother killed (or, perhaps, who has simply seen his mother die). If such people were administered beta-blockers soon after the event and for several weeks thereafter, they would (as Dr. McGaugh put it in conversation with the Council) experience "a significant decrease in the expression of PTSD" months later. Why should they suffer such painful memories if the means to relieve them are at hand?

Clearly, the question is more complicated than I have thus far made it seem. We do not want to remember everything that happens in life, and we need to be able to forget a lot. To take a striking literary example, Dr. Watson was astonished to realize that the same Sherlock Holmes who had written a technical monograph distinguishing 140 different forms of cigar, cigarette, and pipe tobacco (and the differences in their ash) was entirely ignorant of the Copernican Theory and the bodies of our solar system.

"You appear to be astonished," he [Holmes] said, smiling at my [Watson's] expression of surprise. "Now that I do know it I shall do my best to forget it."

"To forget it!"

"You see," he explained, "I consider that a man's brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose. A fool takes in all the lumber of every sort that he comes across, so that the knowledge which might be useful to him gets crowded out, or at best is jumbled up with a lot of other things, so that he has a difficulty in laying his hands upon it. Now the skillful workman is very careful indeed as to what he takes into his brain-attic. He will have nothing but the tools which may help him in doing his work, but of these he has a large assortment, and all in the most perfect order. . . ."

"But the Solar System!" I protested.

"What the deuce is it to me?" he interrupted impatiently: "You say that we go round the sun. If we went round the moon it would not make a pennyworth of difference to me or to my work."

Whatever we may think of Holmes' qualifications as a scientist of the brain or his judgment of what is likely to be useful to him in his work, he is right to see that we must forget a great deal if we are to live at all effectively and efficiently—though, as we shall see, such a pronounced "Holmesian" sense of mastery over what one forgets and remembers may be less fitting for human beings than a more humble sense of organizing, reorganizing, and giving new meaning. But it is clear that the memory must sort and organize experience for us, not just retain an unorganized collection of events. Why not, then, as an aspect of this sorting activity, take steps that are within our power to keep our lives from being crippled or burdened by painful memories?

There could, of course, be complications that would have to be considered in any plan to block memory formation. Criminal prosecutions of those guilty of heinous deeds might depend precisely on *not* blocking the memory of their victims or of witnesses, on retaining as clear and precise a recollection as possible. Or, to take a very different sort of complication, suppose it were possible to keep soldiers from remembering the horrors of battle—so that they experienced no interval of hesitation at the thought of combat. That might make them more efficient and effective killers, but would we really think it desirable?

Nevertheless, we can think of instances that might tempt us and might, at first, seem relatively free of complication. Imagine rescue workers sent in to search for those trapped in the rubble of the World Trade Center after the attack of September 11, likely to carry with them forever horrible memories of the dead and the maimed. They could start on beta-blockers immediately after emerging from the rubble and perhaps be spared. Or a woman who had seen her young child murdered could likewise immediately begin medication, lest the rest of her life should be consumed by such painful memories.

Even in such cases there are complications that might still trouble us. Granting that these people could consent to take the medication, how could they know or decide in that moment whether doing so was wise? Is that the moment in which to decide whether one wants to carry such painful memories along throughout life or to erase them? Perhaps we could argue that rescue workers, knowing that they can at any time find themselves in such tragic circumstances, might give advance authorization to be so treated after the fact.

But can one actually think this through knowledgeably in advance of the experience? And, more important still, if a life is essentially a narrative, we have to ask how we want to think of ourselves in relation to that narrative. Am I simply the author of my story—picking and choosing what is to be included in the

remembered, organized account? Or is my authorship a more limited one—finding ways to make do, to fit even traumatic experiences into the overall story and thereby make sense of it? Exaggerating our own authorship ignores important characteristics of the story of a life. It ignores, for example, the fact that the first years of our life become part of our own memory largely through the shared memories of others. It ignores the fact that one's life exists not only in the privacy of one's own memory but also in the stories others tell about us. Perhaps, therefore, a certain modesty is in order when we think of constructing the story of our life. Even were we able to deal with painful memories by erasing them, it might still be better to struggle—with the help of others—to fit them into a coherent story that is the narrative of our life.

Even granting that, however, we might still wonder whether it would be wrong to block painful memories. Do we have some kind of obligation to remember? If so, to whom would such a duty be owed? I suspect we can imagine circumstances in which we might think that there is indeed an obligation not to forget. For the sake of victims treated unjustly we may need to remember the evil done them, and, in fact, this might be necessary not just for the sake of the victims themselves but for our common humanity. Not to remember the face of evil is to miss the evil of which we ourselves are capable. Not to remember evils done to others is to make it impossible for us to tell the stories of their lives fully and truthfully, which is required not for the sake of vengeance but for the sake of justice. (This is especially true when we remember that the story of one's life is not only one's private creation but is dependent also on the memories of others and the stories they tell.)

Quite often, to be sure, there may be no easy or fool-proof way to integrate painful memories into the ongoing story of one's life. We may need help to manage such a task. It may call for imagination, radical rethinking of who we are, the search for a new direction that can, at least to some extent, redeem the past by taking it up into a way of life that gives it new meaning. Thus, for example, in 1957, the son of Hermann Goering entered a cloistered monastery. "He had done so, as I recall," David Novak writes,

because he could not live in the world any other way considering his name and his family heritage. This news report touched me deeply because so much of our being-in-the-world is not our own decision. We begin to discover in late adolescence the limits of our own existence and, concurrently, the moral possibilities for us within these limits. Hermann Goering's son did not choose to be Hermann Goering's son; he did not choose to be born a German in the 1930s.

What he did choose, however, was to make his own life in a place where everyone assumes a new name, in a place not of Germany or even of this world.

There is something deeply humane about such a decision. Goering's son did not, of course, have the option of simply forgetting the painful truth of who he was, but, had he been able to do so, I suspect that it would have diminished rather than enhanced his person.

Human life has a narrative quality, and, in Stephen Crites' felicitous phrase, each present moment is a "tensed" present. It stretches out in two directions—incorporating the past and reaching out toward the future. Each moment, therefore, contains a narrative in miniature, and every life is a story whose plot may be partially hidden in the present. We cannot know the full significance of any moment in that story—what it contributes and how it affects other moments—unless and until we can read the story as a whole. If we cannot know the full meaning of any moment in a life apart from its place in the entire narrative of that life, our task is not so much to erase embarrassing, troubling, or painful moments, but, as best we can and with whatever help we are given, to attempt to redeem those moments by drawing them into a life whose whole transforms and transfigures them.

Perhaps, therefore, the issue is not so much whether we have an obligation to remember—though there is something to that—but whether the erasure of painful memories does not diminish our humanity. "Remember," the ancient Israelites are commanded by their Lord, "remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you." Even the memory of their bondage is not to be erased, but, rather, drawn into a story that, by God's power and grace, is transformed into one of redemption. To be sure, the Hebrew prophets sometimes describe God's forgiveness of Israel's sin as "not remembering." Perhaps that is fitting for God, or perhaps the metaphor ought not be pressed. But, in any case, when the prophet Ezekiel describes the restored and reconstituted Israel—in which, presumably, God will no longer remember Israel's sin—Israel's own task is described quite differently. "Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good." Human beings, at any rate, are not to erase the memories that give them pain but to place those memories into a new, larger, and redemptive story.

This is appropriate, at least in part, because genuinely human life has an embodied (and therefore limited) character to which we should be faithful. If we consider the facts recounted earlier about how we might prevent painful memories from forming, we are, in fact,

reminded that we are bodies. The beta-blockers or anti-anxiety drugs that block formation of long-term memories are drugs that work on the body in countless ways. They do more than prevent the formation and consolidation of memory. Or, perhaps better, we should say that they do that precisely because they affect other aspects of our bodily life—in particular, the emotions. It is not fitting, therefore, that we should construct the narrative of our life in a way that largely bypasses its embodied character.

In the famous sixth book of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas travels to the underworld in search of his father, Anchises. He finds him “deep in the lush green of a valley”—in Elysium, where the souls of the blessed are. Most of these souls, however, are not destined to remain there indefinitely. Rather, most are to be reincarnated in the bodies of human beings—a fact which, in the poem, provides Anchises the opportunity to survey for Aeneas the future generations of Romans who will be his descendants. When Aeneas inquires how this will take place, Anchises points to the river Lethe, around which many of the souls are gathered.

Souls for whom

*A second body is in store: their drink
Is water of Lethe, and it frees from care
In long forgetfulness.*

These souls, Anchises tells Aeneas, will drink of Lethe “That there unmemoried they may see again / The heavens and wish re-entry into bodies.” Having lost all memory of their former life, these souls will now be given entirely new identities. It is not that a previous identity will undergo transformation by being taken up into what is new and thereby reconfigured; rather, it is that these selves, since they are not essentially bodies at all, can be “unmemoried” without any sense of loss. Their memories are no part of who they truly are, because their bodies are not. Perhaps this makes good sense if we think the body accidental to the meaning and nature of a human life, but if, on the contrary, we do not merely *inhabit* but *are* our bodies, to be “unmemoried” would be to become either more or less than human. Unless we think of ourselves as gods, the more likely result is clear.

How essential memory is to our sense of what it means to have a human life may be seen if we consider a life “story” that—almost—is no longer a story, because, lacking memory, it lacks coherence, lacks connection, lacks a story line. In a chapter titled “The Lost Mariner,” Oliver Sacks has described the life of such a person—Jimmie G., who suffered from severe retrograde amnesia. (Jimmie’s condition, though not caused by an injury, is not unlike that of Leonard Shelby in *Memento*. It is a similar story of one who is essentially

“lost” in the world, though Jimmie, of course, has not embarked on any mission of vengeance.) Jimmie had served, and served competently, in the Navy until the time of his discharge in 1965. It was in 1975 that he was admitted to a home in which he came under the care of Dr. Sacks. Yet, he could remember almost nothing after the year 1945.

Jimmie had been drafted in 1943 at age seventeen and had served as a radio operator on a submarine. He could remember clearly the end of the war and could recount his plans for the future at the time the war ended, but that was as far as his memory went. Nineteen-forty-five was still his “present.” He could recall the town where he grew up and his school days; he could name the submarines on which he had served; he remained fluent in Morse Code; he was good at solving puzzles (so long as they could be done relatively quickly). But his memory stopped at 1945, and he thought of himself as nineteen years old.

This was, however, by no means the most devastating result of his illness. Far more aw(e)ful was the fact that he could form no new memories that would last more than a few seconds. David Hume famously claimed that human beings are no more than collections or bundles of sensations. In Jimmie, Sacks notes, one sees what such a “Humean” person would actually be like—“every sentence uttered being forgotten as soon as it is said, everything forgotten within a few minutes of being seen.” Jimmie’s problem seems to have been precisely the inability to form long-term memories, to consolidate short-term memory into anything lasting. That is to say, his problem was a pronounced and extended version of what we might deliberately bring about in much more limited and defined circumstances if we were to administer beta-blockers to rescue workers emerging from the rubble. “It was not, apparently, that he failed to register in memory, but that the memory traces were fugitive in the extreme, and were apt to be effaced within a minute, often less. . . .”

We can ponder the meaning for human life of memory loss—or erasure—if we take note of Jimmie’s inability to make the events of his life “connect.” He has many moments of experience, of course, but each is new. Each is, in the strictest sense of the word, momentary. Hence—and does this not seem to be crucial?—one cannot discuss Jimmie’s condition with him. “If a man has lost a leg or an eye, he knows he has lost a leg or an eye; but if he has lost a self—himself—he cannot know it, because he is no longer there to know it.” We might imagine—on a smaller and less destructive scale, to be sure—a world in which some of us, sometimes, blocked the formation of painful memories and therefore did not fully share a past, could not fully connect, with others whose memory of those events was intact. How could we live truthfully, or confidently, in such a world?

If to have a human life is, at least in part, to have a life story in progress, then Jimmie has a life largely in the memories of others. It is by no means unimportant that they should so honor his shared humanity that they, so to speak, continually sustain and construct the narrative of his life, but his loss remains great. Each of us is constantly active in memory, constructing and reconstructing the story of his or her life. We forget some things, of course, as we must. And over time we give new and different significance to events we might once have thought fixed in their meaning; they take on a new shape as the overall shape of life changes. But to construct the narrative of one's life not through thought and conversation, struggle and prayer, but simply by erasing some of the materials of that life is to risk losing what is essential to being human. If we cannot say who we have been, we can never know who we are. Our humanity lies not in mastery over the construction of our life story but in the virtues by which we accept the limits of the body, live truthfully in the face of the past, and seek to give new meaning to what is painful or misguided in that past.

It is true, of course, that the more painful the memory, the more difficult it may be to believe that anything in the future could transfigure it or could draw it into a life story that we could bear to acknowledge as our own—and the more tempted, therefore, we may be to seek a technological fix. At the very end of the story of Job, in its canonical version, the Lord restores Job's fortune—indeed, his material and familial blessings become even greater than they were before his trials. Scholars, of course, often characterize this prose epilogue as an addendum to the poem that tells Job's story—an addendum that drastically alters the story's meaning. Instead of a poem in which Job simply suffers inexplicably, we are given—with the epilogue—a story in which Job's suffering is finally redeemed and given coherent meaning.

Many—unable or unwilling to suppose that Job's sufferings might be in any sense redeemed—are likely to prefer the poem without the epilogue. They will prefer Archibald MacLeish's *J.B.*, in which, without any claims for redemptive meaning, one simply bears what comes with human dignity.

*The candles in churches are out.
The lights have gone out in the sky.
Blow on the coal of the heart
And we'll see, by and by.*

But note that neither reading—neither a reading which encourages us to hope that what is painful in the past may be transfigured and given new, redemptive meaning; nor a reading which encourages us to bear the ills of life with human dignity, finding in them occasions

for courage, endurance, and mutual support—neither of these readings supposes that simply erasing the painful past takes seriously the narrative quality of human life.

“How great, my God, is this force of memory, how exceedingly great! It is like a vast and boundless subterranean shrine. Who has ever reached the bottom of it? Yet this is a faculty of my mind and belongs to my nature; nor can I myself grasp all that I am.” Thus, St. Augustine, in one of the most famous discussions of memory ever written. Dive as deep as we may into that “subterranean shrine,” into the depths of the memories that constitute the story of our life, and we cannot yet see the full meaning of any of life's events. Caught as we are in the midst of the story, doing our best to follow a plot whose twists and turns we may not entirely fathom, we cannot see anything from the perspective of the end of the story—and, therefore, cannot say fully who we are or what the events of our life may mean.

That is the gist of Augustine's “confession”: that because only God can catch the heart and hold it still, because we cannot attain that authorial perspective on the end (and, therefore, the full meaning) of our life, God knows us better than we know ourselves. Quite a different spirit is expressed in the famous claim made by Rousseau at the outset of his *Confessions*:

Let the last trump sound when it will, I shall come forward with this work in my hand, to present myself before my Sovereign Judge, and proclaim aloud: “. . . I have bared my secret soul as Thou thyself hast seen it, Eternal Being.”

One who supposed that he could attain that godlike perspective on the meaning of his life might perhaps be in a position to know what experiences were so painful that they were better obliterated from memory. If, on the contrary, we know ourselves as bodies who live in time, whose lives must have a narrative quality but who cannot know the end or full meaning of our life story, then our task is not to erase memory but to connect and integrate memories—to live the story as best one can who does not yet know how the plot will work out. Perhaps, in so doing, some of us will believe that there is no past so painful that it cannot be transfigured and redeemed in a truthful story. Perhaps, in so doing, others among us may suspect that the best we can do is blow on the coal of the heart and see by and by (how the plot takes its course). But neither approach will find good reason to act as if we already knew the full meaning of life's story. In either case we are led to acknowledge our limits, to honor the narrative quality of human life, to accept our need to sustain the life stories of one another, and to wonder at the mysterious depths of a “memoried” human life. FT

What Narrative Theology Forgot

Alan Jacobs

One of the chief themes of the narrative theology that came to prominence in the Anglo-American world in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the centrality of communal experience to the life of Christ's Church. In the work of Lesslie Newbigin, Stanley Hauerwas, Gerald Laughlin, and many others, the "Christian story" is a communal one: we Christians "tell God's story," or participate in God's own telling, in and through the Church. The life of the individual Christian, on this account, makes sense and achieves meaning through participation in this communally recounted narrative. Even the various forms of theological activity can be redescribed in narrative terms, as when Newbigin writes of "the congregation as hermeneutic of the gospel": interpretation of Scripture for Newbigin is not so much what a particular scholar *writes* as what a particular community of believers *enacts*.

These thinkers typically do not deny that the Christian faith makes propositional claims, but they tend to understand such propositions as having their proper force only within the context of the story God tells in history. "Jesus is Lord" is a proposition, but a proposition that compels assent only when Jesus' earthly ministry, death, and resurrection are understood as (collectively) the pivotal and definitive moment in the long history of God's covenantal love for His erring people.

This movement has been a tremendously important and salutary one; it has had the effect of reminding theologians of their ecclesiastical obligations, and has reminded believers more generally of the centrality of common worship to their Christian lives. In many cases it has energized the lives of congregations.

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But something that has, I think, been neglected in the development of this narrative theology is the narrative dimension of individual Christian lives. This is somewhat surprising in light of the fact that one of the key texts prompting the renewal of narrative theology, the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1981), is seriously concerned with the narrative integrity of a given single life. The pivotal section of that book is Chapter 15, "The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life, and the Concept of a Tradition," a chapter that MacIntyre describes as a "contemporary attempt to envisage each human life as a whole." But despite MacIntyre's eloquent exploration of what makes a human life coherent, theologians tended to find more compelling what he says about the narrative coherence (or incoherence) of whole traditions.

In this light it is significant that four years after the appearance of *After Virtue* came a landmark study in the sociology of religion, *Habits of the Heart*. In this book, Robert Bellah and his coauthors deployed a fascinating and compelling range of stories testifying to the damage American individualism has done to countless human lives and their communities. Taken together, *After Virtue* and *Habits of the Heart* seemed to be saying that the manifest incoherence of so many lives, including the lives of Christians, could not be addressed at the individual level, but rather could be ameliorated only by the careful reconstruction of communal bonds. Lives can be healed and integrated only within such communal contexts. As Bellah and his coauthors write near the end of their book, "We will need to remember that we did not create ourselves, that we owe what we are to the communities that formed us, and to what Paul Tillich called 'the structure of grace in history' that made such communities possible." Which in turn means that the sustaining and strengthening of those communities—or, in MacIntyre's terms, those "traditions of moral

inquiry”—must be a major task for anyone who accepts these arguments.

Since the fundamental and indispensable unit of Christian community is the Church, these trends in general intellectual culture have in the last fifteen years stimulated a great deal of ecclesiological reflection: one can draw an interesting line of influence from MacIntyre and *Habits of the Heart* to Stanley Hauerwas and then to John Milbank and the other proponents of radical orthodoxy, all of whom tend to be pronouncedly ecclesiocentric in their thinking. (I owe the term “ecclesiocentrism” to my colleague Ashley Woodiwiss.) How much ecclesial communities, or any other communities, have been practically strengthened by these movements is a question open to debate. What is certainly true is that in serious Christian reflection, questions about the shape and fate of community have come to displace the language of personal conversion, transformation, and development from the central place such language held in Protestant Christian discourse in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. (And, let it be noted, such an emphasis on personal spirituality was shared by liberal, neo-orthodox, evangelical, and fundamentalist Christians—though often for different reasons.)

Now, if the “serious Christian reflection” just mentioned has de-emphasized personal narratives, that is scarcely true of Christian culture at large. Countless Christian writers have extended, and continue to extend, their invitation: “Tell us your story.” Each of us has a story, we are told, a wonderful story that belongs only to us; it is our task to discover what that story is. And in recent years a significant publishing subindustry has arisen for the purpose of helping us in such a “voyage of discovery”: I refer to the many books, tapes, videos, and workbooks on the topic of journal writing, or, as the less scrupulous stylists in the movement would have it, “journaling.”

It is fair to say that recent narrative theology has taken its characteristic forms precisely in order to counter this sort of thing. But it is also worth noting that, if one can pierce through the layers of narcissism and sentimentality that so often deface this talk of “journaling” as self-discovery, these popular writers are reminding us of something that many previous generations of very sober Christians, from Augustine of Hippo to the Puritans of seventeenth-century England and America, would have warmly endorsed: each of us does indeed have a unique personal narrative, one whose essential shape is not always easily discerned. As we shall soon see, Augustine in his *Confessions* repeatedly wonders at the faculty of memory precisely because it allows us to revisit the events of our lives and discern the trajectory that they describe. Likewise, but in a more systematic way, the Puritans developed a comprehen-

sive theory of personal spiritual record-keeping, with the journal as the key instrument. The great unacknowledged ancestor of today’s guides to journal-keeping is John Beadle’s *Journal or Diary of a Thankful Christian*, first published in 1656, which gives comprehensive instructions for the would-be diarist. For Beadle, it is as important for a Christian to keep a journal as it is for a businessman to keep a ledger; indeed, it is far more important: after all, the “account” we will be called upon to make before God some day is more consequential than any businessman’s.

Beadle’s recommendations were widely heeded in the seventeenth century. As William Haller pointed out many years ago, the diary became an effectual Protestant substitute for the ancient Catholic practice of auricular confession; but it also enabled people committed to the Calvinist doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to keep tabs on their own perseverance. Near the end of the sixteenth century, the English Puritan Richard Rogers wrote that studying his diary was necessary “that I may so observe my heart that I may see my life in frame from time to time.” This is an important concept; Rogers is describing the inevitably retrospective character of self-understanding—what Hegel meant when he wrote that the Owl of Minerva flies only at night. The “frame” that Rogers refers to is the narrative shape that can only be discerned after some development takes place. Discrete events by definition have no plot, and even several of them (like numbers in a sequence) may not seem to add up to anything, but as the events accumulate sufficiently, patterns become more and more evident. The passage of time provides the “frame” necessary to discern those patterns—but only if the events themselves are faithfully recorded, “plotted” as on a graph. Slowly, the picture (the story) emerges. For Richard Rogers and the other Puritans, the function of the journal was to plot the graph of God’s work in our lives.

A life story, in its full and complete form, can of course only be understood after that life is over—indeed, dying may be the experience that gives final clarification to a life, either by confirming or by countering the pattern that had seemed to rule the life up to that last point. In explaining the importance in Mexican culture of the Day of the Dead, Octavio Paz writes, “Tell me how you die and I will tell you who you are.” The desire for the perfectly clarified and clarifying view from beyond the end is particularly strong when we cannot discern a meaningful pattern in the events of the moment; no more sad and beautiful testimony to that lamentable situation can be found than the end of Chekhov’s play *Uncle Vanya*, when Vanya and Sonia (the insulted and ignored, the poor relations who fill the servants’ roles in the family, the ones to whom nothing sig-

nificant seems ever to happen) sit alone at a table, and Sonia muses:

We shall go on living, Uncle Vanya. We shall live through a long, long chain of days and endless evenings; we shall patiently bear the trials fate sends us; we'll work for others, now and in our old age, without ever knowing rest, and when our time comes, we shall die submissively; and there, beyond the grave, we shall say that we have suffered, that we have wept, that we have known bitterness, and God shall have pity on us; and you and I, Uncle, dear Uncle, shall behold a life that is bright, beautiful, and fine. We shall rejoice and look on our present troubles with tenderness, with a smile—and we shall rest. . . .

There can be something sweet and even radiant about Sonia's hopefulness (as in Brooke Smith's lovely performance in Louis Malle's film *Vanya on 42nd Street*); but there is certainly something deeply sad about her resignation to incomprehension, to the failure of understanding, on this side of the grave. The Puritan use of the spiritual journal to "frame" life is a technique to prevent this incomprehension, to achieve some sense and articulation of a life's shape even as it is being formed—to see, if only through a glass darkly, something recognizably meaningful.

The triviality, even fatuousness, of many current ways of talking about "our stories" has led many thoughtful Christians to abandon the traditions of personal narrative or testimony as tokens of misbegotten "individualism." But such an abandonment is unfortunate. What we need is better and more responsible and more coherent personal stories, not the complete subsumption of all personal narrative into group narrative. In this context the work of Walter Benjamin—the great German-Jewish cultural critic who died while fleeing from the Nazis in 1940—is vital:

Every real story . . . contains, openly or covertly, something useful. The usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another, in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim. In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers. But if today "having counsel" is beginning to have an old-fashioned ring, this is because the communicability of experience is decreasing. In consequence we have no counsel either for ourselves or for others. After all, counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding. To seek this counsel one would first have to be able to tell the story. . . . Counsel woven into the

fabric of real life is wisdom. The art of storytelling is dying out because the epic side of truth, wisdom, is dying out.

In the great essay ("The Storyteller") from which this quotation is taken, Benjamin explains how the various forces of technological modernity have gradually reduced the power and value of experience—have made personal experience less "communicable." Properly understood, Benjamin's argument reveals that the proliferation of bland, solipsistic personal "stories" in our current cultural situation does not indicate a recovery of "communicable experience," but just the opposite. We tell our stories, all right, but we don't think of them as offering counsel in wisdom: I "journal" for myself, not for others; the only counsel I can offer them is to do their own "journaling."

In this light it can be seen that the formulaic "testimonies" of evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity, while they may appear to some communally minded theologians as a manifestation of individualism, are in fact almost the only remaining cultural form of the kind of storytelling Benjamin praises. An impoverished form of it, to be sure—primarily because it is inflexible in shape and confined chiefly to testimonies of conversion rather than testimonies of imitation and vocation—but a valuable form nonetheless, because it preserves in some fashion the idea of storytelling as the passing along of wise counsel. Such a form of storytelling needs to be strengthened and enriched, not abandoned.

It is important that Benjamin says this of the true storyteller: "It is granted to him to reach back a whole lifetime (a life, incidentally, that comprises not only his own experience but no little of the experience of others; what the storyteller knows from hearsay is added to his own). His gift is the ability to relate his life; his distinction, to be able to tell his whole life." Christians would do well to become storytellers in this sense. In short, what is currently needed, it seems to me, is a narrative theology that draws on the great resources provided by the thinkers I have mentioned—MacIntyre, Newbigin, Hauerwas, and so on—but which also understands what Augustine and the Puritans understood: the importance of thinking narratively about individual lives. If we are to achieve this goal, we must cultivate, as our primary resources, a faculty and a virtue: memory and hope.

Many readers of Augustine's *Confessions* have noted a dramatic change at the beginning of the tenth of its thirteen books. Up through Book IX, Augustine has been relating in a pretty straightforward manner the key events of his life leading up to his conversion to Christianity and, following soon thereafter, the death of his mother Monica. Then, abruptly

abandoning the autobiographical narrative, Augustine embarks on a series of theological and philosophical speculations about time, memory, and the opening chapters of Genesis.

Or so, at any rate, the common view goes, though especially attentive readers of the *Confessions* have asked whether the first nine books are really so straightforward, and the last four so completely disconnected from them and from each other. I will not enter that debate here, except to say that the reflections on memory that dominate Book X have everything to do with the story that Augustine has been telling to that point. Augustine is fascinated by the faculty of mind that has allowed him to relate the events of his early life: How is it, he wonders, that we are able to store events in our minds and retrieve them when we need or want to do so? Book X of the *Confessions* repeatedly professes wonder at the God who has made us with such a capacity:

The power of memory is great, very great [*magna ista vis est memoriae*], my God. It is a vast and infinite profundity. Who has plumbed its bottom? This power is that of my mind and is a natural endowment, but I myself cannot grasp the totality of what I am. Is the mind, then, too restricted to compass itself, so that we have to ask what is that element of itself which it fails to grasp? Surely that cannot be external to itself; it must be within the mind. How then can it fail to grasp it? This question moves me to great astonishment. Amazement grips me.

Yet even in this outburst of wonderment Augustine is pursuing a vital point: the relation of memory to self-understanding. At the beginning of Book IX, just before describing the decisive moment of conversion, Augustine had asked, “Who am I and what am I?” Now, at the beginning of the next book, he explores the faculty that enables him at least to attempt answers to those questions. Indeed, some chapters later than the passage I have just quoted, Augustine repeats his claim that “Great is the power of memory” and follows that claim with a renewal of the question of self-knowledge: “What then am I, my God?”

These reflections lead to a point that is of particular importance for our purposes. Augustine—being concerned with his “ascent” (a word used repeatedly in Book X) from sin to salvation—is preoccupied with the relationship between memory and sin: he makes a point of noting that we are able to remember our sins without committing them over again. For him, this is one of the most important of memory’s characteristics, and an indication that it is a special gift of God to those who would repent of their sins. Indeed, if the recollection of sin inevitably drew one back into that sin, memory

would be a curse rather than a blessing: there would be no possibility of responding to one’s past experiences so that one could “ascend” to a higher and better life. (Augustine knows perfectly well that the memory of sin *can* lead one back into that sin, but it need not do so—for him, the miracle is that recollection of sin is not *always* a renewal or repetition of that sin.)

Therefore, Augustine is led to conclude that memory is not simply a passive function: it is not mere recollection. Memory allows one not only to recall but also to restructure, to reinterpret past events, to discern a pattern in them that was not visible when they occurred. (Thus Richard Rogers’ attempt to “see [his] life in frame from time to time.”) As James O’Donnell has written, “Memory has the power to supplant ‘reality,’ or at least what mortals know of reality: indeed, the whole argument of this half of Book X is that it is through memory that, after the fall, we encounter a more authentic reality.”

Through memory, Augustine explains at various points in Book X of the *Confessions*, we are able to review our past actions and discern a variety of important themes: we can see when we were moving towards God and (conversely) when we were moving away from Him; when we discerned the good rightly and sought it properly and (conversely) when we misidentified the good and sought experiences or possessions that were bad for us; when God was calling us towards Himself, whether we heard His voice or not; and so on. Indeed, we see Augustine employing this notion much earlier in the *Confessions*; for instance, when he describes how his friend Alypius, as a young man come to Rome to study law, had been captivated by the crude and vicious spectacle of the gladiatorial games. Addressing God as always, Augustine writes, “You taught him to put his confidence not in himself but in You. But that was much later.” Nevertheless, “This experience . . . rested in his memory to provide a remedy in the future”—as did the next incident Augustine describes: Alypius’ arrest for theft when he was still living in Carthage and studying under Augustine.

Since the English word “memory” usually connotes merely the passive storage of information, let us use the Latin word *memoria* to indicate this more active, interpretive, constructive faculty that Augustine celebrates. It is *memoria*, in this sense, that enables us to think of our lives in meaningfully narrative terms: the whole project of identifying and pursuing a coherent life would be impossible without *memoria*.

But if *memoria* is the essential retrospective faculty for the believer seeking to make a coherent Christian life, it will only be exercised by those who think such retrospection potentially valuable—that is, for those who are *hopeful*. Hope is the virtue that prompts the

exercise of *memoria*. The believer hopes that his life is making sense, hopes that the “frame” reveals a pattern that adds up to something recognizably Christian. Hope enables us—indeed, commands us—to turn from retrospection to propection. Here it is good to recall a famous comment from Kierkegaard’s journal:

It is quite true what philosophy says: that life must be understood backwards. But then one forgets the other principle: that it must be lived forwards. Which principle, the more one thinks it through, ends exactly with the thought that temporal life can never properly be understood because I can at no instant find complete rest in which to adopt the position: backwards.

In other words, it may be true that “the owl of Minerva flies only at night,” but Kierkegaard suspects that the metaphor hides a profoundly dubious claim: that it is possible to reach a stable end-point of reflection from which Minerva’s owl can take off, and to which it can later return. This can never happen, Kierkegaard says: whenever we look back, we’re still moving forward, and that movement not only makes our retrospective vision somewhat shaky and uncertain, it also increases the chance that while our heads are twisted around we’ll run into a tree or fall into a ditch.

Kierkegaard’s point is vital because it shows that the work of *memoria* is always influenced by the way our prospective imagination is throwing us forward into our future. Therefore the work of *memoria* is always imperfect, incomplete, and subject to revision. We will always be, as Hamlet puts it, “looking before and after”; it would be nice (or simpler, anyway) if we could do just one, or do them in a stable, unrepeatable sequence, but that’s not the way life works. We should never presume that our exercise of *memoria* is perfect, nor that the patterns it reveals predict our future with perfect accuracy.

The word “presume” is important here because presumption is, according to Aquinas and his followers, one of the two characteristic perversions of hope, the other being despair. As Jürgen Moltmann notes, “Both forms of hopelessness, by anticipating the fulfillment or by giving up hope, cancel the wayfaring character of hope.” In one of his sermons D. L. Moody proclaimed,

You ask me to explain regeneration. I cannot do it. But one thing I know—that I have been regenerated. All the infidels and skeptics could not make me feel differently. I feel a different man than I did twenty-one years ago last March, when God gave me a new heart. I have not sworn since that night, and I have no desire to swear. I delight to labor for God, and all the

influences of the world cannot convince me that I am not a different man.

I have no doubt that God did indeed make Moody “a different man” than he had been before—indeed, gave him new life. But it is almost impossible for the even moderately critical reader not to be dubious about this account. Perhaps you no longer swear, Mr. Moody, but are you humble? Are you perfectly compassionate and loving? And anyway, if I were to drop this brick on your toe, might you not suddenly rediscover the “desire to swear”? I find myself suspecting, not Moody’s regeneration itself, but his belief in its completeness and his assumption that its moral effect is permanent and irreversible. He seems, for the moment at least, to have forgotten that he is but a pilgrim, a “wayfaring stranger” (as the old hymn puts it). He has “anticipated the fulfillment” which comes only to the blessed in heaven; his statement is presumptuous and therefore not truly hopeful.

It’s this kind of Christian “testimony”—the air-brushed past and the sugarcoated future—that causes Christian “testimonies” to set people’s teeth on edge. We may therefore find ourselves tempted to neglect or even abandon the practice of testimony, absorbing all individual differences of vocation and experience into the one great story of the Church—and to some degree that is just what recent narrative theology has done. Embarrassed by the presumption, the triumphalism, and the sentimental self-absorption of the testimonies that have arisen especially from the evangelical movement, narrative theologians have drawn our attention back to the great narrative arc of God’s work among His people in the world. Yet Christians are commanded to be “prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15), and unless one is determined to do no more than mutely wave people towards the nearest church, this can only be achieved by giving some account of the coherence (not perfection) and development (not fulfillment) one discerns in one’s own life.

Moreover, no healthy and mature Christian is simply a generic church member, but instead has some specific role to play in the life of the community:

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak

with tongues? Do all interpret? (1 Corinthians 12:27-31)

For this reason Christian witness (both to unbelievers and to young Christians) must involve an account of the particular genre which one's Christian life embodies. So the remedy to the problem of presumptuous or otherwise deficient testimony is not to stop bearing personal witness, but rather to refine and develop our understanding of what such witness should be. And here is where the Church's great communal story offers

its aid: for it is the responsibility of the "many members of the one body," who collectively celebrate and enact that story, to guide each individual member into paths, into life genres, that harmonize with the great melody of God's redeeming work in His creation. How can the Church bridge this gap between the Christian metanarrative and our own individual life stories, in such a way that all such accounts are faithful to each other and to God? That is the challenge facing anyone who would take narrative theology to the next level of critical and prophetic power. FT

Liturgical Dance Notes

Balletic slim with gently nubile curves
 And sweetly graced extensions of long limbs—
 They sway, step, bend to syncopated hymns.
 Their mothers beam. How well, they think, dance serves
 God's glory (and their own) in finer style
 Than old processions jumbled full of tots,
 White-veiled and bumptious, tasting nuns' DO NOTs,
 Surging off center down the middle aisle.

Lord, as You look on such eclectic prayer,
 Such very now liturgic elegance
 With its proponents all quite blind to where
 It self-creates less happy circumstance,
 Hold tight and tenderly within Your care
 Little fat girls who won't be asked to dance.

Mary Margaret Milbrath

Fighting the Noonday Devil

R. R. Reno

For most of the modern era, Christian apologists have emphasized the role of pride as the primary barrier to faith. Take Milton, for example. At the outset of *Paradise Lost*, Satan rallies his fellow fallen angels with a speech of exculpation. Bidding farewell to the “happy Fields” now lost, Satan hails the “infernal world,” promising his followers that they, with him, might make “Heav’n of Hell.” What seems a disaster can be made a victory. Satan’s reasoning is simple. “Here at least,” he says, “we shall be free.” “Here,” he continues, “we may reign secure.” The gain, then, is autonomy and self-possession. Thus, in famous words, Milton has Satan pronounce the purest formula of pride: “Better to reign in Hell, than to serve in Heav’n.”

To a great extent, the standard story of modernity emphasizes exactly the self-confidence and self-assertion that Milton describes in *Paradise Lost*. The emerging powers of modern science gave the seventeenth and eighteenth century a keen sense of the real powers of the human intellect. Rebelling against servile obedience to dogmatic and clerical authority, progressive forces in Enlightenment culture championed free and open inquiry. The same sentiment, this standard story continues, characterizes modern moral and political thought. Against traditional moral ideals and social forms, modern thinkers have sought, and continue to seek, a pattern of life derived from and properly expressive of our humanity. Thus, Ralph Waldo Emerson shouts the battle cry of modernity: “Trust thyself.” Against subservience to the ideals of another, Emerson writes, “Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.” So central and important is this self-affirmation that Emerson reports that “if I am the

Devil’s child, I will then live from the Devil.” Better to reign in the hell of self-affirmation, than to subordinate the self to external ideals or principles, no matter how heavenly.

This modern voice of rebellion against God’s sovereignty is quite real. Yet, in the twilight of modernity, do people really attack the Christian tradition because they have vibrant Emersonian souls? Do the nay-sayers and critics of Christianity attract audiences of willful and self-assertive individualists who are eager to find leverage to free themselves from the constraining powers of dogma and priestcraft? Does secularism today stem from a deep self-trust and demonic pride?

The answer, I think, is “no.” Pride may go before the fall. However, after the fall, other spiritual temptations and difficulties predominate. In our times, whether we call the prevailing outlook late modern or postmodern, the vigor and ambition of the ideal of self-reliance has lost its luster. When the United States Army can adopt a fine Emersonian sentiment—“Be all you can be”—as a recruiting slogan, then surely what was once a fresh challenge has become a hopeless cliché. For this and other reasons we need to turn our attention away from pride and look elsewhere for the deeper sources of resistance to the Christian message.

Looking elsewhere does not mean looking away from the Christian tradition. Christians have not always thought pride the deepest threat to faith. For the ancient spiritual writers of the monastic movement, spiritual apathy was far more dangerous. Recalling the sixth verse of Psalm 91, the desert fathers wished to guard against “the sickness that lays waste at mid-day.” Evagrius of Pontus, a fourth-century monk, is one of the earliest sources of information about the desert monastic movement, and he reports that gluttony, avarice, anger, and other vices threaten monastic life. Yet, of all

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these afflictions, he reports, “the demon of acedia—also called the noonday demon—is the one that causes the most serious trouble of all.”

Acedia is a word of Greek origin that means, literally, “without care.” In the Latin tradition of the seven deadly sins, it comes down to us as *tristitia* or *otiositas*, sadness or idleness. But citing synonyms and translations will not do. For the monastic tradition, acedia or sloth is a complex spiritual state that defies simple definition. It describes a lassitude and despair that overwhelms spiritual striving. Sloth is not mere idleness or laziness; it involves a *torpor animi*, a dullness of the soul that can stem from restlessness just as easily as from indolence. Bernard of Clairvaux speaks of a *sterilitas animae*, a sterility, dryness, and barrenness of his soul that makes the sweet honey of Psalm-singing seem tasteless and turns vigils into empty trials. Medieval English writers often speak of acedia as wanhope, a waning of confidence in the efficacy and importance of prayer. For Dante, on the fourth ledge of purgatory, those afflicted by acedia are described as suffering from *lento amore*, a slow love that cannot motivate and uplift, leaving the soul stagnant, unable to move under the heavy burden of sin.

Across these different descriptions, a common picture emerges. The noonday devil tempts us into a state of spiritual despair and sadness that drains us of our Christian hope. It makes the life of prayer and charity seem pointless and futile. In the heat of midday, as the monk tires and begins to feel that the commitment to desert solitude was a terrible miscalculation, the demon of acedia whispers despairing and exculpatory thoughts. “Did God intend for human beings to reach for the heavens?” “Does God really care whether we pray?” “Is it not unnatural to seek solitude and chastity?” According to another ancient writer in the Evagrian tradition, the noonday demon “stirs the monk also to long for different places in which he can find easily what is necessary for his life and can carry on a much less toilsome and more expedient profession. It is not on account of locality, the demon suggests, that one pleases God. He can be worshiped anywhere. . . . Thus the demon employs all his wiles so that the monk may leave his cell and flee to the race-course.”

Are these temptations that afflict the monk as strange or alien as the unfamiliar Greek word, acedia? I think not. Let me update the whispering voice of sloth: “All things are sanctified by the Lord, and one could just as well worship on the golf course as in a sanctuary made by human hands.” Or: “God is love, and love affirms; therefore, God accepts me just as I am. I need not exercise myself to change.” Or: “We should not want to put God in a box, so the Christian tradition must be seen as a resource for our spiritual journeys, not as a mandatory itinerary. I can pick and choose according to my own spiritual needs.”

In our day, these temptations seem far more dangerous than Emerson’s “trust thyself.” After all, how many people, believers or unbelievers, wish to reign anywhere, in heaven, hell, or even in their own souls? Few, I imagine. Most of us just want to be left alone so that we can get on with our lives. Most of us want to be safe. We want to find a cocoon, a spiritually, psychologically, economically, and physically gated community in which to live without danger and disturbance. The care-free life, a life *a-cedia*, is our cultural ideal. Pride may be the root of all evil, but in our day, the trunk, branches, and leaves of evil are characterized by a belief that moral responsibility, spiritual effort, and religious discipline are empty burdens, ineffective and archaic demands that cannot lead us forward, inaccessible ideals that, even if we believe in them, are beyond our capacity.

Acedia, then, is a real threat, a deadly sin doing its deadly work in the present age. Its presence can be detected rather clearly in two features of our intellectual and moral culture. The first is the intellectual spirit of dispassion and coolness that grows out of the ideal of “critical distance.” This ideal often contributes to the *torpor animi* that afflicts any who have entered into the habituating practices of our universities. For many of our professors, the drama of education is to break the magic spell of immediacy. Just as the commonsense observation that the sun revolves around the earth is quite false and must be corrected, so, we are told, we must step back from the moral and social opinions we were taught as children. Nothing that is given should be accepted. We must step back from our initial assumptions and see them as being, at best, merely true-for-us rather than being simply true.

In order to spur us toward critical thought, the dominant strategy of contemporary instruction is shock therapy. Anticipating the method, the early modern essayist Montaigne described his desires to “pile up here some ancient fashions that I have in my memory, some like ours, others different, to the end that we may strengthen and enlighten our judgment by reflection on the continual variation of human things.” Montaigne is confident that by “piling up” these examples, we will be forced to stop thinking parochially and recognize that men and women have lived many different ways according to many different ideals and customs. We will be shocked by the diversity, and for just this reason, we will be levered away from an atavistic loyalty to our particular ways of viewing the world.

But the ancient fashions Montaigne catalogues are not simply diverse. He chooses very carefully, and in a way that also anticipates postmodern historiography and cultural study, his examples tend toward the prurient and base. Montaigne quotes ancient descriptions of how people wiped themselves after bowel movements,

as well as peculiar postcoital practices. The shock, then, is redoubled, for not only do we see the diversity of cultures, but as Montaigne insinuates, we begin to worry that those beliefs and practices we think so decisive for human decency and moral rectitude will come to seem as silly and pointless as the ancient Roman expectation that men would pluck all the hairs off their chest, legs, and arms.

What Montaigne sought to achieve has become the very ideal of "critical thinking." He wants us to step back from our loyalty to the immediate and seemingly self-evident truths of our inherited way of life. He wants us to separate ourselves from our cultural context. To think responsibly about culture, morality, and religion, then, involves establishing critical distance. Just think about biblical criticism. In most cases, the basic strategy of instruction is to force pious students to step back from the immediacy of the canonical form of the text to see how what seems to be a doctrinally consistent and spiritually unified whole is, in fact, a text made up of heterogeneous sources and layers of editorial revision.

Or, more simply, consider the term "Hebrew Bible," which is now replacing "Old Testament." This terminological shift has many sources, including an anxiety about Christian supersessionism. However, among them is a pedagogical goal. We are not to engage these ancient writings as constituent elements of a unified witness to the crucified and risen Lord. Instead, we are to keep the prophetic power of the text at arm's length and allow the text to speak to us only as a witness to a now dead thing called "Ancient Israelite Religion." This pedagogical strategy distances us from living religious passions—passions that might overwhelm the cool judgment of the historical scholar in the present and that have no doubt led to religious violence in the past.

I do not wish to condemn the pedagogy of critical distance in toto. How can we undertake historical, social, and cultural inquiry without, in some way, breaking the magic charm of immediacy, without stepping back from our inherited context and preconceptions? Furthermore, in the Socratic tradition of Western thought, the leverage of objection and counterargument forces a moment of reflective hesitation that can heighten rather than diminish our ardor for the truth. My point, then, is not to criticize the critics. Rather, I want to draw attention to the spiritual consequences of critical distance, consequences that now prevail in spite of the best intentions of scholars and professors.

To learn that Muslims have many wives, that Hindus have many gods, and that Eskimos have many words for snow yields no insight other than the recognition of diversity. The effect is not to shift our loyalty from appearance to reality, as Plato portrayed the effect of

the dialectic of Socrates. Nor does cultural study follow the pattern of modern science, where, for example, we move from the illusion of a moving sun that circles the earth to the accurate knowledge that the earth rotates on its axis. Quite the contrary. The now widespread effect of the modern critical project is to undermine our confidence that any moral or cultural system should properly command our full loyalty. For this reason, as John Henry Newman observed, critical thinking has "a tendency to blunt the practical energy of the mind." It loosens the bonds of commitment and distances us from the immediacy of truths we once thought unquestionable. Critical distance may free us from prejudice, but it can also undermine the hope that enduring truths might be found. It can engender a humility that sustains tolerance, but it can also so relax the passions of the intellect that our civility comes at the price of conviction.

The ways in which this leads to *acedia* are, I think, obvious. The very sentiments that the classical Christian authors feared are precisely the virtues modern educators seek to instill in their students. The *lento amore*, the slow love that Dante thinks must be purged from our souls, is the dispassionate heart that establishes critical distance and waits for compelling evidence. The *sterilitas animae* that so worries Bernard of Clairvaux describes quite well the ideal of a critical thinker who has purified himself of the corrupting parochialism that limits his larger, more universal vision. When someone prefaces a comment with the confession that he is speaking from a "white, male, upper-middle-class perspective," it reveals either a competition for the upper-hand ("I am more critical than you are") or a despair of ever saying anything worthwhile.

Critical distance is not the only ideal of our time. We can never achieve an entirely care-free approach to life. Commitment energizes our culture even as critical inquiry encourages dispassionate analysis. Yet the very nobility of our commitments can create a distance that is as debilitating as critique. Since no actual society or movement lives up to that ideal, we can end up unengaged in fact and in action—pushing away evil rather than seeking the good. Controlled by what the old writers called *fastidium*, a fastidious conscience, we boil with outrage on the surface of our souls, while at a deeper level, we go slack. Thus, many so-called seekers do not seek at all; they wait for something worthy of their allegiance and the waiting becomes habitual and comfortable. Our society has far more of these "waiters" than "seekers."

This fastidiousness is evident in our cultural response to suffering, the second feature of our current intellectual and moral landscape that strikes me as emblematic. We recoil from cruelty, and this dominates our col-

lective conscience as the *summum malum*. The taboos of traditional morality may evaporate as we cultivate critical distance, but no pure vacuum develops in their place. Instead, our sensitivity to suffering and our horror over cruelty increases. Just consider the case of my grandmother, who went to a public hanging at a county fair in Hannibal, Missouri, when she was a child. Today, we shudder at the thought. How, we ask ourselves, could our forebears have been so insensitive to suffering and cruelty?

Once again, I do not intend a blanket criticism of our present squeamishness. Most likely, we should be thankful that *something* of moral significance has filled the void created by critical consciousness. At least we cannot gaze upon torture and suffering with a dispassionate and care-free attitude. Nonetheless, we must recognize how contemporary moral sensibilities tempt us toward acedia. Our vague and general moral sentiments—"suffering is evil"—overwhelm our immediate duties and corrupt our ability to function within the complexities of ordinary moral relations. As Judith Shklar wrote, "To hate cruelty more than any other evil involves a radical rejection of both religious and political conventions. It dooms me to a life of skepticism, indecision, disgust, and often misanthropy."

Our misanthropy is swaddled in kindness, but it manifests the symptoms of acedia nonetheless. How many parents cannot muster the determination to discipline their children because they cannot bear inflicting the suffering it will require? How many educators have despaired of grading, not out of lassitude or neglect, but because they shrink from the thought of the hurt feelings of those who do poorly? The examples are but instances of a broad cultural trend. Demand and expectation are hurtful, and we turn away from zeal in order to soften the blows of discipline. Our general commitment to reduce suffering causes us to hesitate from inflicting the pain of shame. Thus, acedia, a languid disregard for moral and social standards, is now a virtue.

For this reason, I do not think our present culture of affirmation is based on an Emersonian conviction that each person is lit with genius. Rather, we hold our tongues and smile politely when people tell us of their divorces, abortions, infidelities, and transgressions because we do not want to make anyone feel bad. We indulge and we trim, because the thought of suffering paralyzes. Fixed on the horror of cruelty, the fastidious conscience is brought to inaction by the very passion of its commitment. Fearing evil—why add to the grief of divorce by condemning it?—we withdraw from action.

How can we bridge the distances demanded by critical thought? How can we overcome the fastidious conscience that cannot countenance the "no" of discipline? First, we need to guard against the tendency of

modern theology to turn the afflictions of acedia into enticements toward virtue. Consider Paul Tillich's formulation of the "Protestant Principle." It is the negation of all positive, finite, and worldly forms of faith and practice. In this way, Tillich makes critical distance into a form of faith. "What makes Protestantism Protestant," he writes, "is the fact that it transcends its own religious and confessional character, that it cannot be identified wholly with any of its particular historical forms." The stepping back that marks critical thought is, then, the essence of true religion. "Protestantism," Tillich continues, "has a principle that stands beyond all its realizations." "It is not exhausted by any historical religion; it is not identical with the structure of the Reformation or of early Christianity or even with a religious form at all." Or still again, "The Protestant principle . . . contains the divine and human protest against any absolute claim made for a relative reality." Thus, Tillich draws a conclusion that is ubiquitous in modern progressive theologies: "Nobody can have the ultimate, nothing conditioned can possess the unconditional. And nobody can localize the divine that transcends space and time." Or to quote from a bumper sticker version of the same: My God is too big to fit into any one religion.

If Tillich's Protestant principle is true, then why in the world would anyone experience, let alone give in to, a burning desire to come to the Lord in baptism and worship? If nothing conditioned can possess the unconditional, if the finite is not capable of the infinite, then who would not despair of the religious life? Contrary to Tillich, we must stop pretending that the distance and dispassion of modern intellectual life are covert forms of faithfulness. Critical thought may produce what St. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 7, calls worldly grief, the sorrow that any honest person must feel when he recognizes that sickness, disease, and death conquer finite flesh. But we must be crystal clear. Critical thought does not and cannot produce the godly grief that St. Paul commends. That comes from repentance and personal change, not critical insight.

This leads me to my second observation. In Dante's *Purgatorio*, the principle of sacramental penance holds sway. Vices are cured by their contrary, and thus, the slow and tepid love of the slothful is purged by a frenzied fervor. So, in a picturesque scene, just as Dante and Virgil doze off on the ledge of *lento amore*, they are awakened by a crowd of penitents rushing by, shouting and weeping with overwrought passion. "Sharp fervor," says Virgil to those who run by, "makes up for negligence and delay which you perhaps used through lukewarmness in doing good." Here we need to be careful not to moralize, for according to Dante, as for all pre-modern writers, the great work of charity is first and foremost the work of prayer. To the extent that we are

brought to dispassion by critical thought, we must enter into the disciplines of daily prayer with all the greater fervor and commitment. The more we feel the torpor of critical distance, the more swiftly we must run toward the daily office, toward regular study of Scripture, toward the bread and the cup of the Eucharist. An intimacy with divine things is the proper way toward a passion for divine truth. We cannot enjoy that which we hold at a distance.

This insight also holds true for the intellectual life. Critical distance easily produces a *torpor animi*. We must resist the temptation to forever look behind or above or below. At some point, we must train our minds on some aspect of study, whether Wordsworth's *Prelude* or a puzzling question in topology. We must allow ourselves to be romanced and ravished by the promise of truth. As St. Bonaventure observes in the prologue to the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, those who study must be "anointed with the oil of gladness" so that they might be inflamed with desire for wisdom. If we are to fight the noonday devil of acedia, then the *lento amore* of critical distance needs to be counteracted by forms of intellectual life that hasten toward an embrace of truth. Desire for truth needs to gain the upper hand over fear of error.

Evagrius Ponticus offers a different remedy for sloth. For him, the single great weapon against acedia is stability. This seems to contradict Dante's rushing throng, but it does not. The penitent are hurrying away from their negligence. Evagrius, however, is not concerned with how to restore the fallen, but how to prevent the monk from falling in the first place. He writes, "The time of temptation is not the time to leave one's cell, devising plausible pretexts. Rather, stand there firmly and be patient." When, a few centuries later, St. Benedict made stability the centerpiece of Western monasticism, he did so for the same reason. A great stratagem of the slothful is to hurry about from place to place to find a more congenial locale for their spiritual projects. The moment a postmodern seeker finds worship somewhat cold, off he goes to another church to try to find more "vitality," or even more likely, he logs onto Amazon.com and orders a book on Buddhist spirituality. We demand immediate results, and should we experience the dryness and tepidness that comes from distance and alienation, we respond by distancing ourselves still further.

This agitated search for something higher, something more transparent—"the pure gospel"—comes at a great cost. One can no more play games with separation and divorce in marriage and expect to enjoy the fruits of intimacy, than one can in one's union with the body of Christ. One can no more serve Christ by loyalty to theological abstractions than serve human beings by loyalty to sentience. Only a focused love can overcome distance. After all, Dante's rushing crowds on the ledge of sloth are not going hither and yon. They are all

going the same direction—toward Him in whom all will rest.

Knowing whether to follow Dante's advice and rush toward intimacy or to heed Evagrius and remain in stable loyalty cannot be reduced to a formula or principle. There are no intellectual solutions to spiritual problems. Like each of the seven deadly sins, acedia must be fought with spiritual discipline. Such discipline is profoundly alien to our culture, not because we have alternatives, but because we entertain the fantasy of life without spiritual demands. This fantasy is the most important legacy of modernity. For the great innovation of modern culture was the promise of progress without spiritual discipline. All we need to do is adopt the experimental method, calculate utility, institute the rule of law, establish democracy, trust the market. In each instance, scientific knowledge, the machinery of proper procedure, the invisible hand of a well-designed process, will carry us forward. If we will but believe in this promise, we are told, then we will be free to neglect our souls. For according to this modern dream, our virtues and vices are inconsequential matters of private taste and personal judgment. Thus, although our society is increasingly willing to use economic incentives and legal sanctions to influence behavior (welfare reform and laws against smoking are signal examples), we insist that all discipline must remain on the surfaces of life. Once economic and legal requirements are met, we insist upon our right to live as we wish.

This fantasy of life without spiritual demands demonstrates the depth of our captivity to acedia. Pride has no role here, for even when vicious, ambition shapes the soul. Our ideal, by contrast, is shapelessness. We want to be free . . . to be ourselves. Our ambition is a tautology empty of any will to shape or sharpen our lives. Even as we sculpt our bodies in the gyms, we cultivate a languid spiritual disposition, one aptly described by Chaucer:

*For ye be lyke the sweynte cate
That wolde have fissh, but wostow what?
He wolde nothing wete his clowes.*

In our sloth, we will not wet our feet in the frightening water of any spiritual discipline, Christian or otherwise. For fear of wounding sensibilities, for fear of ethnocentric dogmatism, we abandon discipline, or we individualize discipline to the point that it is not discipline at all.

We must wet our claws. Neither Dante's urgent rush toward the truth nor Evagrius' patient stability leads to an exhausted or desiccated existence. On the contrary, the spiritual disciplines they urge serve the end of intimacy. Their strategies awaken and tether, energize and focus. They wish us to become persons with distinct outlines and deep purposes. Only as such persons can we

be partners in fellowship—with the truths we seek and with each other. One can no more desire the blessings of marriage with indifference or a wandering eye, than seek a lasting truth with languid disregard or lack of concentration. This holds true in our relation to God. We must desire holiness to allow the burning coal to touch our lips, and we must be attentive and focused to hear the still, small voice. We should rush toward our

Lord, for we can never become too intimate, and we should wait patiently with Him, for He always has something more to give. To do so, we must place the pedagogy of critical distance and the dictates of conscience within a larger vision of journey toward the truth, a journey in which the warm and enduring embrace of love is to be cherished rather than mocked or feared. FT

Laodicea

I burn for all good heresy
in this ungodly town.
If I had any hope to raise
I'd tear cathedrals down.

I'd show the bishop priestly crimes
except that he is blind.
I'd damn the Protestants to hell
if only they would mind.

George Fox rebuked our dainty tread
by kicking off his shoes,
while Cromwell called for giant steps
in tracks of antique Jews.

But we now lack the grace to sin
and boldly be forgiven:
all our neatfoot vice ensouled,
our bootless sinners shriven.

If I were fast enough afoot,
I'd let the meter run—
trumpet truth from yellow cabs,
cry witness to the sun.

But here I sit, before the fire,
with tepid wrath at heart.
I burn light verse to warm my feet
and sin my little part.

J. Bottum

Books In Review

What's So Funny?

THE MORALITY OF LAUGHTER. By F. H. BUCKLEY. *University of Michigan Press.* 239 pp. \$29.95.

Reviewed by Dermot Quinn

FOOTBALL, a famously dour Scotsman once remarked, is not a question of life and death: "It's more important than that." The same might be said, with greater justice, of humor. A vast literature, growing by the year, testifies to the fact that comedy is no laughing matter. Witness those professional funny men who seem to lead lives of dull or doped desperation. Woody Allen, in therapy for years, is so addicted to angst that his entire career depends on it. John Cleese abandoned Monty Python for a psychiatrist's chair. Spike Milligan was a manic depressive. Malcolm Muggeridge thought his days as editor of *Punch* the most miserable of his life. Tony Hancock, Britain's greatest comic a generation ago, died of an overdose in an Australian hotel. The list could be extended. "I make myself laugh at everything," said Beaumarchais, "for fear of having to weep." Clowns have been shedding tears for a long time. For them, it is happiness that seems forced and unreal; an unexpected light amidst the encircling gloom.

To be sure, this is a familiar trope, a truth deadened by repetition. All the same, it is strangely reassuring, reminding us not only that laughter and sorrow are commingled in any life

but also that they must be in equilibrium. Madness comes when one over-tips the other, turning a mood into an entire mode of being. The man who is funny all the time is not funny at all. The perennial pessimist—think of Jaques in *As You Like It*—makes us laugh, not cry. Such people lack emotional complexity. Some atrophy of the soul has turned them into half-people, frozen in grin or grimace.

To that extent, laughter is a question of life or death: spiritual life, spiritual death. "I will go to the altar of God," generations of priests used to intone, "to the God who gives joy to my youth." The psalmist recognized that a life without laughter is no life at all. Our own casual speech, quite unconsciously, acknowledges it, too. Notice how we say "humor me" when demanding to be taken seriously, as if laughter and personal identity amount to much the same thing. In some ways, they do. After all, what is a person but a balance of humors, a combination, in Addison's phrase, of "so much wit, and mirth, and spleen"? Asking to be humored is to assert uniqueness and moral worth. There is much to be said for that ancient medical wisdom.

All this may be granted. Still, another part of us finds it difficult to take seriously those who think to explain the hidden meaning of mirth. Consider Kant, for example. Laughter, he claimed, was "an affection arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing." This is funny, but not in the way he intended it to be. Consider also Hobbes, for whom laughter was "nothing but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly." This is the equivalent, surely, of describing wine by reciting the chemical formula for alcohol. Such definitions are lumpish and too literal. One is reminded of the Reverend Sydney Smith, finest clerical wit of the nineteenth century, when asked why

his dull contemporaries had gone so much farther in the Church than he. The laws of physics have been reversed, he said: "They have risen by their gravity and I have sunk by my levity." Hobbes and Kant seem to have fallen into the same black hole. Nor are they alone. Other explanations of humor, even less pithy, smack of the economics seminar or the computer science textbook. "Laughter," Frank Buckley assures us in the volume under review, "assumes an informational asymmetry between wit and butt, . . . performing . . . a signaling function, communicating information from one party to another." Lines like this help explain why he is Professor of Law at George Mason University and not host of the *Tonight Show*.

Still, Buckley has a point and a good one. (He also has a much more elegant pen than this sentence suggests, and a far richer sense of humor.) Think of Kant and Hobbes again. Even if exemplifying what G. K. Chesterton called "the monstrous spectacle of men being sombre and pessimistic about the origin of laughter," they were not entirely risible. After all, their theories, claiming to find humor in disparity and misplaced expectation, were more or less self-ratifying. They prove their point precisely by making us laugh at language comically overblown, at prose too ponderous for its own meaning. In the end, the joke is on us, not them. Of course, not everyone who investigates laughter is so clever. Some are not dead-pan comics: they really *are* humorless. Think of J. Y. T. Greig, chronicler of comedy in the 1920s. Arguing for no fewer than eighty-eight theories of laughter, he seemed to spot them at every turn, no sooner capturing one than seeing others flutter into view. Chasing butterflies in order to crush them is unworthy sport.

WHERE, THEN, DOES Professor Buckley stand in this debate? With commendable dispatch, he gets to the heart of

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the matter. Forget Greig's eighty-eight explanations of laughter, he says. Ultimately it comes down to two. There are "superiority and non-superiority theories, only the former affirming that laughter always signals a sense of superiority," the latter having no such aim. With the first, to make an obvious point even more obvious, a "butt is made to feel inferior, and those who laugh reveal their superiority over him." With the second, the laughter is, as it were, victimless. Think of puns, for example, or aural jokes such as Haydn's "Surprise" Symphony. Playfulness of this kind does not depend on a dupe, unless one includes the audience itself in that category. Likewise the laughter of friends: hardly an assertion of superiority, except perhaps the superiority of sociability itself. A fair-minded fellow, Buckley gives a good account of non-superiority theories, but he is not convinced by them. Sociability is important, he concedes, but at the heart of every laugh lies a sense of superiority. Some object must be pierced, some target destroyed. "There is no laughter without a butt," he proposes, "and no butt without a message about a risible inferiority."

This "positive superiority" he distinguishes from "normative superiority." The latter makes the stronger claim that "laughter communicates a true superiority and that the butt is truly an inferior person." To paraphrase the old line, the reason some people have a superiority complex is that they are superior. Positive superiority, he thinks, is more easily defended than normative superiority. The first requires the joker merely to *think* himself better than his object, not actually to *be* better. The second requires both, an ambition that in the end proves fatal to it. How does normative superiority account for the laughter of the wicked? The gratuitously cruel remark? The sick joke? Not very persuasively. Gallows humor is all very well for those going to the gallows; for those sending them there it is hard to take.

Conceding the objections to normative superiority, Buckley is reluctant to abandon it entirely. It is possible, he thinks, to defend a softer version, the claim that "most [if not all] laughter offers us valuable lessons on how to live." Laughter, even laughter not obviously satirical, exposes vice and extols virtue. It reaffirms a shared

vision of the good life. It reminds us of the need for joy. These are good arguments and, with wit and panache, he easily sustains them. Buckley has written a fine and funny book that will be read with pleasure and instruction. Any volume praised by P. J. O'Rourke and Roger Scruton, names not usually yoked together, must surely have much to commend it.

TO BE SURE, the case is sometimes stretched too thin. These various categories—laughter as superiority, as emotional release, as recognition of incongruity—are permeable and overlapping. Jokes and joking cannot be disaggregated as if consisting of one part satire to two parts sociability to three parts *schadenfreude*. Buckley knows this, of course, but occasionally forgets his own stricture that theory rigidly adhered to often fails to account for "the richness and complexity of human experience." Too much analysis destroys the comic moment. Sometimes we laugh at a butt's defects because they are absurd, sometimes out of relief that we have avoided social hazard, sometimes for no very good reason except the best reason of all: to cheer ourselves up.

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Think of the difference between incongruity and hypocrisy. Where does one end and the other begin? The ninety-year-old Floridian pretending to be forty is absurd, a proper object of ridicule, but the joke lies in a kind of visual disparity rather than in the discovery of some great moral deceit. On the other hand, a preaching President who turns out to be priapic, an Oval Office Elmer Gantry, is laughable not because his behavior is discrepant but because it is disgraceful. Such amusement is only marginally reaction to the comic incongruity of portentous authority falling flat on its face. Greater moral understandings are at stake: that truth-telling is important, that fidelity matters, that chastity and self-control are gifts to be cherished. These insights we reinforce by laughing at those who traduce them.

Of course, if we take too much pride in our own virtue—"I thank you, Lord, that I am not as other men"—we run the risk of becoming comic gulls ourselves. Laughter is a versatile weapon and must be handled with care. Still, hypocrisy is the tribute that vice pays to virtue and it is right to remind ourselves of the virtue it pretends to possess. That is where humor comes in. It is a code that signals how we ought to live, a reminder of goodness in a world that sometimes lacks it. Listen to the jester; his joke is a sermon, a homily in one-liners. We ignore his strictures at our peril.

The case could be made that laughter thus understood amounts to little more than a form of social control. Apparently subversive, its real purpose is to endorse a moral community's sense of itself, becoming yet another weapon in a never-ending war of values. Notice how its chief beneficiary is the butt himself, ridiculed into conformity with decent opinion. Notice how "through laughter, we are recalled to common sense." Notice how its "basic message" about the good life is "moderation." There is a *gemütlich* quality to this moral vision, a hint of pipe-and-slippers. In fair-

ness, Buckley's project is not to see laughter as a kind of bourgeois balm. The contentment he seeks is deeper than that. On the other hand, complacency is never far from view. Perhaps he should be more careful to avoid it. That said, to problematize humor as no more than an instrument of collective conformity is to miss the point. *Of course* laughter exerts social suasion; *of course* it makes us think before we act. That is what moral systems are supposed to do.

Yet even this seems thin and etiolated when weighed against the deeper claims of laughter. Buckley rightly proposes that laughter teaches us not only how to live but how to live well. It reminds us that we must "extract joy from our lives." It helps us survive "the dour, rationalist nightmares of machine law, machine art, machine cities." It offers us bonds of friendship not only with the living but the dead. Above all, it leads us to a vision of the divine. Holy laughter, Dante claimed, is one of the special gifts of paradise. Those who reject it reject God Himself. That is why Thomas More, soon to die, comforted his friends with the assurance that before long they would be reunited "merrily in heaven." Such surety was well expressed by P. G. Wodehouse, bringer of joy to millions. If any young writer with a gift for being funny has got the idea that there is something undignified about making people laugh, he wrote in a now forgotten essay, let him read the Talmud:

And Elijah said to Berokah, "These two will also share in the world to come." Berokah then asked them, "What is your occupation?" They replied, "We are merry-makers. When we see a person who is downhearted we cheer him up."

These two, he wrote, "were among the very select few who would inherit the kingdom of heaven." Let us hope that we meet them there.

The Ironies of American Power

OF PARADISE AND POWER: AMERICA AND EUROPE IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER. By ROBERT KAGAN. *Knopf*. 103 pp. \$18.

Reviewed by Paul Carrese

IN A WIDELY READ and discussed essay in the Summer 2002 issue of *Policy Review*, Robert Kagan analyzed the increasingly rancorous relationship between the United States and Europe in terms favored by the so-called neoconservatives who have exercised such a decisive (and controversial) influence on the foreign policy of the Bush Administration since September 11, 2001. The essay's argument was perfectly captured in its title, "Power and Weakness." In Kagan's view, America's extraordinary military power decisively shapes its approach to the world, just as Europe's relative weakness determines its outlook. Whereas the former sees a world filled with dangers

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that can best be managed through the strategic use of military force, the latter believes that the world (or at least Western Europe) has entered a Kantian era of perpetual peace in which virtually all disputes can be contained using international organizations. According to Kagan, Ameri-

cans and Europeans have been led by their relative power and weakness to occupy radically different mental worlds.

Kagan's new book, *Of Paradise and Power*, expands on this provocative thesis. In it, he argues that it was America's policies in the aftermath of

World War II that turned Europe away from ambition and war to prosperity and peace. Preferring to shoulder the burden of defending Western Europe from the Soviet Union instead of allowing the continent to rearm itself, the United States relieved Europeans of responsibility for their own self-defense, thereby allowing them to construct the post-political "paradise" to which Kagan alludes in his title. The result is that many Americans now view Europe as a continent of free-riders, enjoying the benefits of American power while demanding that we limit it. Europeans, for their part, tend to consider the United States to be hypocritical for attempting to use international law and concern for equal rights to limit everyone's power but its own.

There is considerable truth in Kagan's account, which accurately describes a very real difference in attitudes and assumptions on opposite sides of the Atlantic. Yet Kagan's aim is not merely descriptive. Rather, he wishes to defend the "Hobbesian" view of power politics he associates with the United States as the best guide to "a new world order." Europeans, he claims, must come to realize that their "Kantian order could flourish only under the umbrella of American power exercised according to the rules of the old Hobbesian order." In Kagan's ideal world, then, Europe would enjoy its "postmodern" zone of peace while acknowledging the need for "modern" American power to protect it and other regions from "pre-modern" threats.

So far, so good—at least until we begin to look for the principles that guide Kagan's analysis of how America should behave in its reign over the world. As far as Kagan is concerned, there are only three options: one is either a Hobbesian, a liberal internationalist, or a pacifist. At no point does he make room for the just war tradition in classical philosophy and biblical theology. This caesura makes Kagan's book much less useful—and

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much more morally cramped—than it might have been.

KAGAN'S OCCASIONAL references to Reinhold Niebuhr suggest an awareness that there is more to the just war tradition than the pacifism that frequently dominates it today. Yet Kagan quotes selectively from Niebuhr, effectively portraying him as a Kaganite Hobbesian. In Kagan's view, Niebuhr is important primarily because he advocated that America had a "responsibility" for solving the world's problems.

But this is *The Irony of American History* (1952) without the irony. In Kagan's account, Niebuhr's distinctive warnings about the temptations of human power are absent—as are his concerns about the perils of hubris and overreaching by those who are overly confident of the efficacy of power and justice in the world. In particular, Niebuhr detected dangers in the combination of American exceptionalism and great power—dangers rooted in pride and original sin. Like Tocqueville, he acknowledged that in many ways America was exceptional and that, marshaled to extraordinary power, our ideals had done and could do much good in the world; hence his criticism of Christian pacifism in the 1930s and defense of the Cold War in its early years. At the same time, however, he warned that American self-righteousness could easily destroy itself through blindness and bluster.

If Kagan wished to avoid the theological overtones of Niebuhr's version of just war thinking, he could easily have looked to its less overtly religious stream, which reaches back to George Washington, Montesquieu, Aristotle, and Thucydides. Instead, Kagan prefers to read Thucydides as yet another enthusiastic advocate of power politics. In doing so, he overlooks the Greek historian's real sobriety—his account of how our baser instincts can overwhelm our higher ones, not to mention his portrayal of

the tragic consequences of war for human self-understanding and decency. To be sure, Thucydides does depict (and subtly criticize) the proto-Kantian moralism of the Melians. But the *History of the Peloponnesian War* is largely concerned with Athenian immoderation and imprudence—and, above all, with its worship of dynamism and power, which won many campaigns but eventually lost the war. Thucydides' primary interest is in promoting moderation.

The same might be said of Washington. But here, too, Kagan tends to focus on extremes, claiming that the commitment of America's founders to international law and diplomacy reveals a "psychology of weakness" that reflects the young nation's lack of power in the late eighteenth century; likewise, the secret yearning of the Founders to beat the Europeans at power politics pointed toward a properly imperial future. But neither posi-

tion accounts for Washington's moderation in seeking a secure America that followed neither pure self-interest nor abstract justice but instead combined the two. According to Washington, provision for security must be balanced by "good faith and justice toward all nations."

KAGAN'S CONTINUAL REDUCTION of politics to power leads to other problems as well. He demeans our staunch and loyal ally, Great Britain, by failing to give the country a place in either the American or European paradigms. Indeed, Kagan reduces to a footnote Britain's support throughout the recent Iraq crisis. Elsewhere, he omits Lord Robertson's invocation of the NATO charter in America's defense after the September 11 attacks. And while he closes his book by advising America to "show more understanding for the sensibilities of others" and more "generosity of spirit," since "a lit-

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Michael Ruse



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the common understanding could still go a long way," his own theory lacks a place for such diplomacy.

Unlike Thucydides, Kagan seems not to recognize that in international affairs perception can be as potent as reality. It may very well be true that, as many neoconservative intellectuals have argued, al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups were emboldened by American military fecklessness throughout the 1990s. Yet it is also the case that such groups frequently come into being in the first place out of a desire to strike back at what their members perceive as America's bullying tactics (in cultural as much as military matters). Such "blowback" does not justify terrorist attacks, but it may help to explain them.

If this is true—even partly so—our response must go beyond the exercise of mere power. In dealing with a

range of threats—from international terrorists to such "rogue nations" as North Korea and Iran—international institutions and multilateral cooperation can and must play a crucial role. And saying so does not require becoming a post-political European. Those who carry a big stick can afford to speak softly and should have the wisdom to do so, knowing that even the biggest stick cannot achieve everything.

The Sociality of Society

THE COMMON GOOD AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS. By DAVID HOLLENBACH. Cambridge University Press. 269 pp. \$23 paper.

Reviewed by Russell Hittinger

IT IS PRACTICALLY axiomatic for Catholic social doctrine that there are common goods which are irreducibly social, and which are not "public" merely by virtue of being utilities for private consumption. David Hollenbach, S.J., who assisted the American bishops in drafting their 1986 pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All*, was charged to discover that "a central concept being advanced by the bishops' letter—the common good—was nearly incomprehensible to most of the people the bishops sought to address." In his new book, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, he wants to convince the reader not only that the common good is intelligible, but also that a politics of the common good is achievable for a pluralistic, commercial republic that values the utility of temporary partnerships and toleration of cultural and religious differences.

Late in the book, Hollenbach reminds the reader that the notion of

a "common good" is analogical, comprising quite different kinds of community. Even so, he almost always speaks of *the* common good. One reason for this rather stiff expression is that he usually has in mind what the ancient thinkers meant by "polity," a word that corresponds roughly, and sometimes misleadingly, to what we mean by the state. According to Aristotle, polity is born in the soil of necessities, but it aims at the good life. An inherent feature of the good life is the deliberation of free and equal citizens about how to live their lives together. The overarching theme of *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* is the worthiness of republican government, albeit one that is qualified and chastened by certain modern realities.

Common goods, Hollenbach argues, are shareable, communicable, and "non-rivalrous in consumption"—"goods we must share in common if we are to have them at all." Moreover, common goods are not "extrinsic or external to the relationships that exist among those who form the community or society in question." Hollenbach clearly and usefully distinguishes the common good from a good that has only the unity of an aggregate ("general welfare"), as well as from goods that are deemed "public" only insofar as they bear upon the well-being and rights of individuals ("public interest"). Common goods, as he conceives them, always are rooted in the sociality of society. "A key aspect of the common good can be described as the good of being in a community at all."

A criticism often made against the left is that "social justice" is a pretext for redistribution of property. For Hollenbach, social justice is not chiefly an exercise of distributing things or utilities, but rather of expanding participation in inherently valuable social activities. This is very close to the classic definition of social justice sketched by Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno*. Hollenbach does not ask

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RUSSELL HITTINGER holds the Warren Chair of Catholic Studies at the University of Tulsa and is author, most recently, of *The First Grace: Rediscovering Natural Law in a Post-Christian World* (ISI, 2003).

whether there are merely private goods, and in what sense they are private. I was surprised that he did not dig more deeply into Catholic social doctrine for the idea of a “universal destination of all goods”—an idea that is controversial, but favorable to his own line of thought.

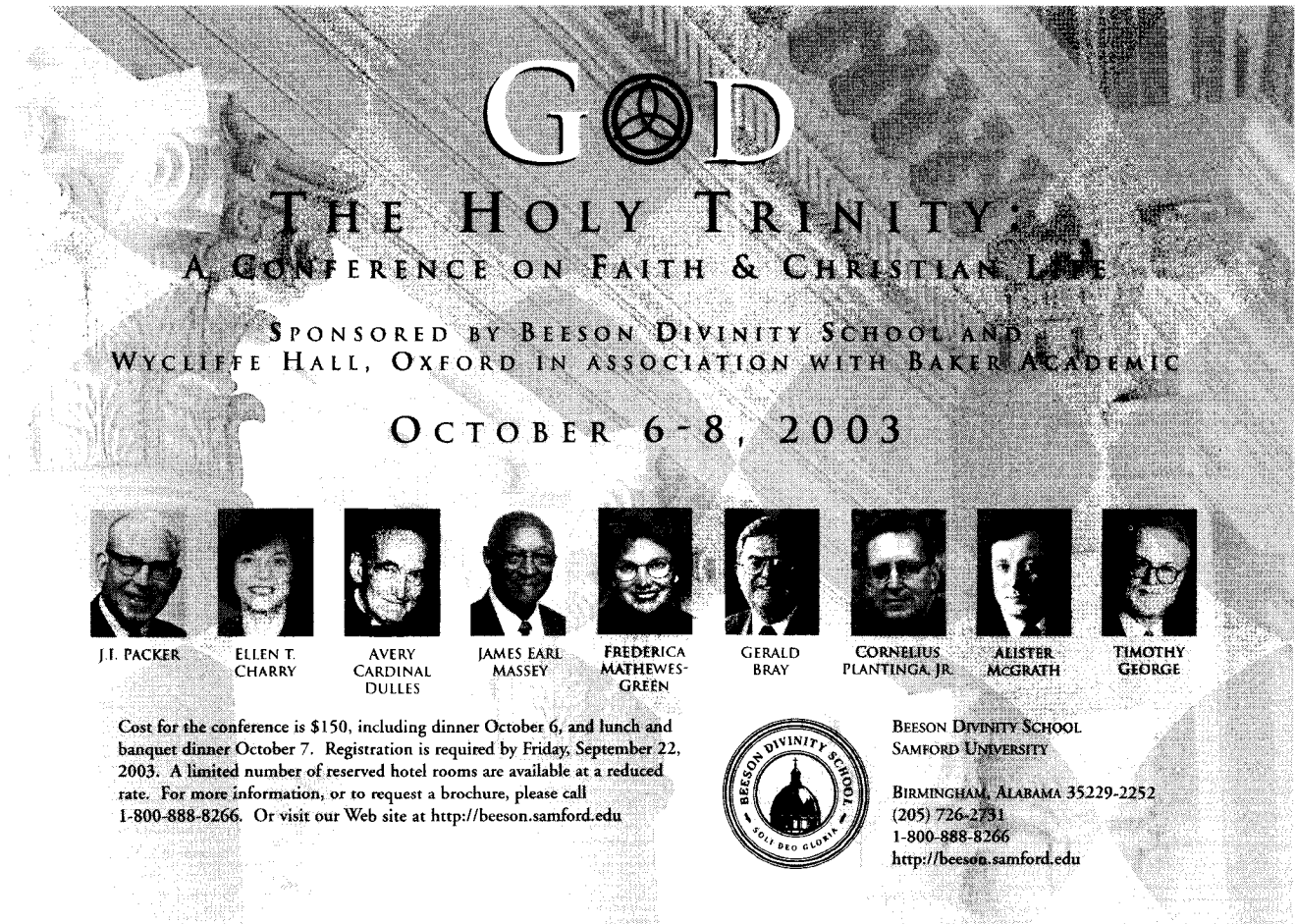
One of Hollenbach’s purposes is to show the limited applicability of toleration. A modern liberal polity, he concedes, is rightly wary of the kind of consensus and solidarity that marked the old regimes. Yet historical contingencies are not “eternal truths.” Hollenbach argues that a liberal polity is capable of more than a quiet enjoyment of private goods supplemented by toleration of the lifestyles and religions of others. Toleration presupposes the good of a social order that allows persons to live their lives without undue disturbance. Furthermore,

toleration is not apt to capture how we think about some social goods. We don’t tolerate exclusion of citizens from those activities most distinctive of citizenship, such as free and equal deliberation about how we should live our lives together. With regard to the political common good, we do not tolerate de jure exclusion from goods that “must be shared if they are to be had at all.”

THIS SEEMS OBVIOUS enough, at least to this reviewer. But Hollenbach’s argument goes further. In his view, we ought not to tolerate de facto impediments to participation in the common good. His survey of the plight of the urban poor takes this route. The problem of the urban poor cannot be remedied simply by racial toleration, nor even by recirculating monies and utilities. Hollenbach proposes that

what is needed is solidarity, shared social forms and life among citizens in the inner city and the white, suburban enclaves. Merely external interdependencies are not enough to constitute a common good.

At a certain level of generality, this is not an implausible position. Hollenbach promises to keep theoretical considerations “close to the ground on which social interaction unfolds today.” I should note, however, that he does not grapple with a really tough case like affirmative action. Smart and nuanced arguments for affirmative action are based not on diversity but on solidarity. Hollenbach reproaches the tolerant, liberal society for underestimating the practical possibilities of solidarity. Though sympathetic with this criticism, I was disappointed that he did not help the reader deal with the



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complexities of affirmative action policies. What kinds of solidarity comport with a republican government such as ours?

Hollenbach also glides over the most sorely contested issues of social morality. Noting that he has no intention of sorting through all of the con-

troversies about natural law, Hollenbach writes: "I presuppose that 'natural' means 'reasonable' in the light of careful reflection on the full range of human experience. Thus what is affirmed as natural must 'make sense' in the light of critically appropriated experience." It is pointless to

quarrel with an author's definition, especially one that contains words like "careful" and "critical." But whether there are moral norms distinct from prudence is an important question. What is nonnegotiable, except for free, equal, and mutually respectful dialogue? Do any of the inherently valuable social forms, such as marriage and family, have fixed boundaries that are not amenable to revisions ensuing from mutual deliberation and "critically appropriated experience"? Even non-governmental societies like churches are treated primarily as training grounds for common goods that are described in terms of equality and respect. I could find little ontological density in Hollenbach's discussion of the sociality of society or societies.

ANYONE WHO PICKS UP this book for the sake of its title will be disappointed. For Hollenbach doesn't have much to say about Christian ethics. He is mainly interested in establishing 1) that religious societies are not necessarily a threat to a political common good—indeed, that they are training grounds for it—and 2) that a religious tradition like Catholicism has positive resources motivating its congregants to act for a common good. It is hard to imagine that anyone but the most hard-core secularist would find these points disputable. Some readers will be annoyed that every example provided of "good" or "safe" religion is on the left of the political-cultural spectrum; unsafe religion, of course, is "fundamentalist," defined as "reaction to the presence of others with different ultimate convictions." The Moral Majority and the guitar-strumming *Communione e Liberazione* will be surprised to find themselves grouped with Hamas and Hezbollah. The author evinces not the slightest irony about the fact that his own list would qualify, given his definition, as an exercise in fundamentalism.

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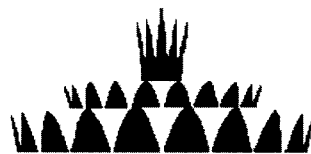
The discussion of the Christian contribution to the political common good and social justice is so flat and unnuanced that one is not sure if it represents the author's own theology, or whether he didn't think it necessary to present Christian social thought with any specificity. Protestant social ethics makes hardly a cameo appearance. When he treats the Catholic tradition, elementary distinctions are often missing. For example, on the relationship between solidarity and charity, Hollenbach contends that anything beyond the minimum for the very existence of the political common good should be regarded as "supererogatory acts of citizens." We cannot suppose, he reckons, "that all citizens will consistently love God with all their hearts and love their neighbors as themselves." In a footnote, he observes that Thomas Aquinas did not develop the distinction between minimal and maximal requirements of the common good "in a fully adequate way." But he surely knows that Thomas held that the two great commandments are a matter of justice; indeed, they are summary and matrix of the natural law, not merely of the beatitudes. They are not per se supererogatory. Hollenbach reminds the reader that the "fullness of charity" will be realized only eschatologically. True enough, but the same pertains to justice, and it doesn't clarify how the two great precepts are incumbent upon conduct this side of the heavenly kingdom.

It is true that affirmative precepts require prudential application, and in matters of polity this requires a judgment about what the positive law can legislate and enforce. But when the polity can only command X, it doesn't necessarily imply that doing more-than-X is supererogatory. Perhaps Hollenbach wishes to remove the great commandments from justice in the strict sense of the term. Perhaps he means that they are binding only in the mode of supernatural charity. It is hard to say, because he

does not elucidate the issue. I doubt, however, that he wishes to reduce the morally obligatory and supererogatory to what is prescribed or merely allowed by human positive law in view of the contingent features of the political common good. What about those suburbanites who have little or no interest in sharing their lives with the impoverished of the inner city? Without further qualification, Hollenbach's position will guarantee that the bishops' pastoral letters will not move hearts and minds.

I was also puzzled by Hollenbach's insistence that the Christian vision of the human good is "particularistic" rather than "universal." To give but one example, he says that the Christian community must "combine fidelity to the particularistic vision of the human good rooted in the gospel with a commitment to discerning the common morality needed in a pluralistic but interdependent world."

Christians, of course, could not quarrel with the sociological fact that Christianity is a particular religion. Admitting different ways we could conceive of Christianity as a part of some other whole, it doesn't seem quite right to suggest that it is particularist in the sense of ethnicity, language, custom, or culture. In regard to a particularist vision of human goods becoming universal by virtue of dialogue, I found Hollenbach's use of the conciliar document *Gaudium et Spes* tendentious and inadequately qualified. One wonders why the Council bothered to begin its constitution on the Church with the words *Lumen Gentium* ("light to the nations"). Hollenbach seems more interested in showing that Christians are safe participants in the public square than he is in exploring what they might bring to the notion of solidarity, even as it pertains to the terrestrial city.



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The Right Double Negative

WHAT WE CAN'T NOT KNOW: A GUIDE.

By J. BUDZISZEWSKI. *Spence*. 272 pp. \$27.95.

Reviewed by John M. Grondelski

MARGARET SIMON, my sixth grade English teacher and grammar martinet, would have been shocked by this book's title: *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide*. Back in 1970 I learned, under pain of death, never to use a double negative. But that was thirty-some years ago. Today, Miss Simon

JOHN M. GRONDELSKI was formerly Associate Dean and Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at the School of Theology, Seton Hall University.

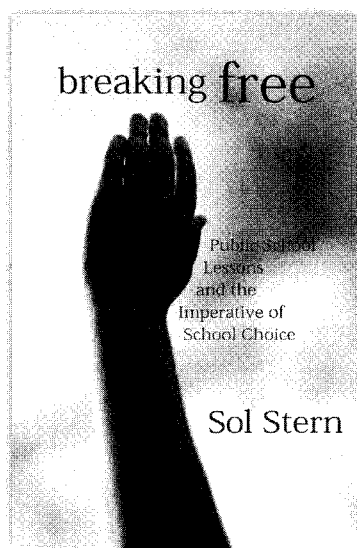
might be shocked by an even greater claim: that such basic moral principles as the Decalogue itself are believed, by many of the West's most vocal elites, to be unknowable.

The unknowability of the Commandments lies in the epistemological *terra incognita* of modern and post-modern thought, which denies a human capacity to know anything with certainty in ethics or morality. What is called moral knowledge may be a reflection of the interests of the dominant class, race, gender, etc. It may express subjective feelings or sentiments. There's but one thing moral knowledge is not, at least according to reigning opinion: it is not real knowledge, knowable with certainty, which imposes a claim precisely because it is knowable.

In some ways, then, J. Budziszewski's book could not be more untime-

ly. Its thesis—that there are certain basic moral truths that human beings just plain can't *not* know—would have hardly generated a yawn for most of the past three thousand years of Western history. Yet today, that same thesis is liable to provoke a firestorm as intense as when Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas started paying compliments to such extremist and radical notions as Aristotelian natural law theory.

The erosion of confidence in the certainty of moral knowledge has been developing for some four centuries, although it has come to widespread notice only in the past three generations. Budziszewski labors under no illusions: he doesn't for a moment believe he can reverse the philosophical tide with one book. One might even say he's writing to the choir, for he acknowledges his audi-



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—Chester E. Finn, Jr., former Assistant Secretary of Education

fundamentals and affirming a clear vision of America's civic culture. In *Breaking Free*, he contrasts his experience with that of his two sons, both of whom recently attended some of New York's elite public schools. While spending time in these schools, he discovered things that should concern not only parents, but all Americans—instruction shaped by "progressive" fads and politically correct clichés; dictatorial unions that protect inept teachers; and a self protective bureaucracy that puts the interests of employees ahead of the needs of the students.

visited Catholic schools that were successfully educating minority and underprivileged children in New York. He vividly describes how these cash-starved schools are performing small miracles every day with children the public schools have betrayed or given up on. Moving on to Milwaukee and Cleveland, Stern found that voucher programs there have rescued large numbers of poor minority children from violent, chaotic and failing public schools and allowed them to attend parochial and private schools where high expectations often result in high achievement.

Sol Stern grew up in the South Bronx and attended New York City public schools in the 1940s and 1950s, receiving the best education that America's urban public schools had to offer at the time, strong on classroom

If these were the best public schools, Stern thought, the worst were unimaginable. He was right.

In his quest to understand what has gone wrong with American education, Stern also

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ence to be "the persuaded, the half-persuaded and the wish-I-were-persuaded"; he aims to reassure "plain people [of] the rational foundations of the common moral sense." That's not an unimportant task when, living in the topsy-turvy world of postmodern moral laxity, those who are convinced of the possibility of morally certain knowledge often feel like the last sane men in the madhouse.

Budziszewski argues that "a good deal" of the moral knowledge we can know with certainty is encapsulated on both tablets of the Ten Commandments. Budziszewski stresses the relevance of God to the ethical enterprise, devoting an entire chapter to detailing the deficiencies of what he calls "the Second Tablet Project." Since it is at a minimum passé to speak of God publicly, there are those who try to make the Decalogue more palatable to modern sensibilities by lopping off those Commandments directly referring to God, concentrating instead on the ones that govern human relations more generally.

Against this approach Budziszewski insists that man's natural knowledge of God is essential to his natural knowledge of morality: a naked public ethic is as dangerous as a naked public square. Such a "godless natural law" entails nothing less than "a direct attack on humanity itself," because it "would revere the laws of human nature only insofar as we continued to be human. Denying that our humanity is a creation, it would have no reason to preserve this humanity, and no objection to its abolition." Jettisoning the idea of creation also destroys both the notions of obligation (reducing it to a cautious prudence that restrains no one but the timid) and order (replacing it with arbitrariness and caprice by denying any basis for a unifying principle of reality).

Budziszewski adduces four "witnesses" to testify to the human capacity for certain moral knowledge: "deep conscience" (*synderesis*), design as such, our own design as human beings, and

natural consequences. He also examines how the human being who denies these moral truths steep himself ever deeper in perverted forms of remorse, confession, atonement, reconciliation, and justification, all in the vain attempt to convince himself and others that evil is really good. These

five practices, if engaged in sincerely, can reorient the person back to the objective true good. But sincere remorse, confession, atonement, reconciliation, and justification demand that the wrong one has done be acknowledged and repented. The most basic truth of our capacity for

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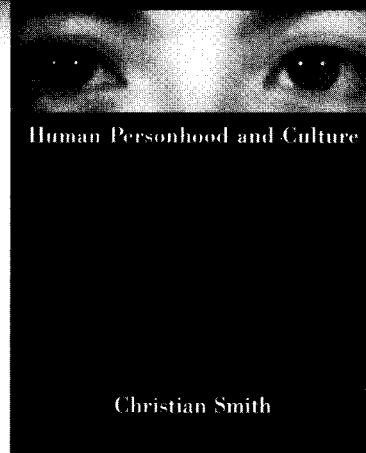
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—Craig Calhoun, Professor of Sociology and History, New York University; President, Social Science Research Council

Moral, Believing Animals



"This is as good as books get: visionary yet rigorous, polemical yet constructive, bold yet careful, engaging yet precise. Smith argues that to be human

is to be a moral believing animal interacting with a social and cultural order that is itself a moral order. His discussion, while aimed at his fellow social scientists and thoroughly engaged with their literature, is also deeply informed by recent philosophical discussions about belief and morality, and employs the results of those discussions with insight and unwavering sure-footedness. A masterful achievement." —Nicholas Wolterstorff, Noah Porter Professor Emeritus of Philosophical Theology, Yale University

* * * * *

Smith suggests that human beings have a peculiar set of capacities and proclivities that distinguishes them significantly from other animals on this planet. Despite the vast differences in humanity between cultures and across history, no matter how differently people narrate their lives and histories, there remains an underlying structure of human personhood that helps to order human culture, history, and narration. Drawing on important recent insights in moral philosophy, epistemology, and narrative studies, Smith argues that humans are animals who have an inescapable moral and spiritual dimension. They cannot avoid a fundamental moral orientation in life and this, says Smith, has profound consequences for how sociology must study human beings.

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certain moral knowledge is, after all, the first principle of practical reason: do good and avoid evil. Nobody asks, "Why do good?" The good is self-justifying, so much so that even its counterfeits want to trade in its value.

The human orientation toward good is so fundamental that even when moral agents do evil, they inevitably seek to redefine it as good. Budziszewski insists that such efforts are self-deceptions, because human beings cannot evade the deepest voice of conscience pronouncing their deeds evil. That is when remorse, confession, atonement, reconciliation, and justification become the "five furies" that seek to avenge moral truth in the face of *mauvaise foi*. False remorse can facilitate repetition of the evil deed: self-anesthetization is a temporarily effective if ultimately destructive means of drowning out remorse. Confession can be an acknowledgement of guilt or an exercise in self-justification, the difference being that the latter usually results in a compulsive need to repeat the story over and over in a kind of morose delectation not far removed from today's "tell-all" talk shows.

When atonement is attempted without acknowledgement of the real ethical debt, conscience becomes a kind of moral "loan shark," compelling us to "pay pain after pain, price after price in a cycle that has no end because we refuse to pay the one price demanded." Shared guilt is often a form of pseudo-reconciliation, binding together those who would build new world orders—from the Thousand Year Reich to "tolerant" approaches to "sexual diversity"—in their need to reconcile the people of the world to themselves. Justification then means subverting reality to one's desiderata, rechristening the latter as "reality" and then claiming that it demands respect and even legal protection.

FOR WHOM is this book written? On one level, it's wildly out-of-sync with the times, defending such ideas as moral knowledge and design, which contemporary philosophy has long believed to be dead and buried. The book has other eccentricities, as well. Some chapters are argued in philosophical prose. Others, such as the chapter on "objections" to the claim

that we can be certain of at least some moral knowledge, are written in dialogue form, opening the way for hostile critics to suggest that Budziszewski constructs and demolishes his own straw men. Yet despite these quirks, Budziszewski's engaging style and intellectual rigor suggest that his primary audience is students—that is, those who most need and crave intellectual immunization against orthodox relativism. And for them, Budziszewski's commonsense approach to moral phenomena is perfectly suited. All too often higher education today deems its task to be the production of epistemological agnostics and moral nihilists. *What We Can't Not Know* provides young people with the argumentative ammunition they need to resist that juggernaut.

Finding God in China

THE VICTORIAN TRANSLATION OF CHINA: JAMES LEGGE'S ORIENTAL PILGRIMAGE. By NORMAN GIRARDOT. *University of California Press*. 861 pp. \$75.

Reviewed by David Marshall

FEW ENTERPRISES have provoked as much ingenious skepticism in modern times as the attempt to translate spiritual truths between cultures. Emile Durkheim, noting that beliefs "vary infinitely" among Australian tribes, thought it followed that the tribes craft the beliefs. Richard Rorty questions whether we can "rise above all human communities" to know even mundane realities. Edward Said describes "Orientalism" as an exercise in imperial hegemony. "Knowledge of

DAVID MARSHALL is founder of the Kuai Mu Institute for Christianity and World Cultures. He taught most recently at Siebold University in Nagasaki, has worked as a missionary in China, and is author of *True Son of Heaven: How Jesus Fulfills the Chinese Culture*.



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subject races . . . makes their management easy and profitable." East is East, and West is West, to paraphrase Kipling, and whenever the two appear to meet, something is fishy.

In *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage*, China scholar Norman Girardot offers a thoughtful, polemically charged, and richly documented introduction to the life and times of the great nineteenth-century sinologist. Industrious, kindly, and as honest as rain is wet ("woe to the biographer saddled with someone too blandly virtuous," Girardot moans in mock horror), Legge was a missionary and the first professor of Chinese at Oxford. Legge carefully translated the entire body of Confucian classics into English ("the most prodigious single-handed contribution of British scholarship to sinology," as Girardot accurately describes it), and was friend to such cross-cultural pioneers as Max Müller, Hong Rengan, and Sun Yat-sen.

For the most part, Girardot agrees with the currently fashionable assumption among postmodern literary critics that "conquering, ruling, and understanding" are "quite the same thing." Yet Girardot's subject is hardly a raving imperialist. Legge claimed, for example, that "the more a man possesses the Christian spirit, and is governed by Christian principle, the more anxious will he be to do justice to every other system of religion." The gentleness and humility with which Legge approached China seems to belie Edward Said's claim that every Orientalist was "a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric." In the end, Girardot offers a more nuanced and self-reflexive observation: "One can understand the Orient as a judge or a guest, as an aggressive transformer or a careful translator, as a bold general or a cautious pilgrim."

One could go further, however. Despite the sometimes militant tone of their metaphors (which Girardot deplores), missionaries empowered

"natives" in a vast variety of ways. Legge, for instance, was an active member of the Anglo-Oriental Society for the Suppression of the Opium trade. Christian "social crusaders" thus saw no conflict between honoring the best of a nation's culture and trying to liberate it from its own worst impulses.

IF IT IS FAIR to criticize an author for succeeding in what he sets out to do, then the chief weakness of this otherwise meticulously researched study is Girardot's preference for placing Legge horizontally, in the sociology of his times, rather than vertically, within Christian tradition. Legge is "Victorian," "liberal," "non-Conformist," "Orientalist." His subtitles—"A movement of mind," "There are other worlds besides our own," "Less Doctrine, more Love"—suggest Girardot might nudge "Pilgrim Legge" not toward the Celestial City he actually has in sight, but the feel-good Vanity Fair of modern relativism.

Nowhere do the two men seem more at cross-purposes than in Girardot's comments on how Legge reached a liberal "accommodationist" position because he came to believe that "certain ancient Chinese sages were prophets raised up by God." But by finding God in China, Legge "accommodated" himself to Paul and Augustine—both of whom predicted that awareness of God would be found universally—rather than to Müller or Confucius. Still less did he anticipate Rorty or Said.

The Temple of Heaven in Beijing, where Legge believed Chinese emperors worshiped God, looks more like a space ship (built by aesthetically gifted aliens) than a traditional Chinese temple. By the time Legge came to worship, emperors had been sacrificing to *Huang Tian Shang Di* here for over four hundred years. Twelve red pillars, like sons of Jacob or apostles of Jesus sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice, stand sentinel around four red and gold pillars in the center.

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Feeling that he was "standing on holy ground," Legge took off his shoes and sang with his mission friends: "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow."

The debate over whether primitive peoples were aware of the "Judeo-Christian" God has had a dramatic history. Victorian theories of religion placed God at the end of a long chain of social evolution. Edward Tylor, founder of Cultural Anthropology, thought Legge mistaken in concluding that Shang dynasty Chinese were theists. A year after Legge's death, however, Tylor's former student, Andrew Lang, published *The Making of Religion*, in which he pointed to belief in a "high God" among aboriginal peoples around the world. Though ignorant of China, Lang boldly suggested that Legge (not to mention St. Paul) was probably right, and Tylor wrong. Then, in 1899,

Shang oracle bones extensively inscribed with the name of the High God, *Di*, were unearthed. Thirteen years later, Durkheim noted that belief in God (under many aliases) was "everywhere the same" among diverse Australian tribes. Over the following decades, Jesuit anthropologist Wilhelm Schmidt described the theistic beliefs of primitive cultures around the world in encyclopedic detail. Schmidt's argument has been ignored, patronized, and semantically deconstructed, but never, I think, disconfirmed, except in minor detail.

One source of difficulty in settling such issues is Western ignorance of Eastern languages. For this reason, Girardot's informed discussion of the debate over the correct Chinese name for God, from the Jesuits to the modern academy, is quite helpful. As the

Tai Zong emperor said when he encountered Nestorian Christianity: "The true *Tao* does not have a single invariable name." The Zhou accepted the Shang term for God and combined it with their own to create imperial rituals that lasted (at the Temple of Heaven) until the twentieth century. Chinese Nestorians wrote of the "Mysterious Three in One," "True Lord without Origin," and "One Sacred Spirit." Ming scientist Xu Guangqi, seeing himself as heir to theistic ancestors, referred to God by a variety of Chinese titles. The Kang Xi emperor used the Catholic term "Lord of Heaven" as a valid name for the God he worshiped in the Temple of Heaven.

TOWARDS THE END of his career, Legge sought the divine Logos in the writings of Lao Zi, Zhuang Zi, and even

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Buddha. Girardot again expresses surprise. But here, too, Legge echoed the insight of such early Christian thinkers as Clement, who said that "Truth is one," though torn in pieces by the sects. Christ thus not only joins cultures and eras, but schools. I suspect Legge understood this, though he often expressed the relationship between Christianity and Chinese religions in clumsy Victorian terms of "superiority" and "inferiority," rather than fulfillment, integration, or even truth and error.

Several decades after Legge's death, another cross-cultural anthologist, the great scholar Lin Yutang, wrote of his love of Confucius, Lao Zi, Buddha, and Zhuang Zi. Telling how he came back to Jesus through their teaching, he quoted a messianic epigram from the ascension of the legendary Emperor Xun: "Blow out the candles, the sun is risen." By that he did not mean that Christ rendered the kindness, humility, and insight of Chinese sages superfluous, but that in Christ, the *Tao* found heavenly consummation. With that, James Legge would have heartily concurred.

A Triple Agent in South Dakota

THE DEGAEV AFFAIR: TERROR AND TREASON IN TSARIST RUSSIA. By RICHARD PIPES. Yale University Press. 153 pp. \$22.95.

Reviewed by J. Bottum

ONCE UPON A TIME—well, actually, it was in 1897, on the campus of the public university that the citizens of South Dakota had just built in the town of Vermillion to express their pride in their recently achieved state-

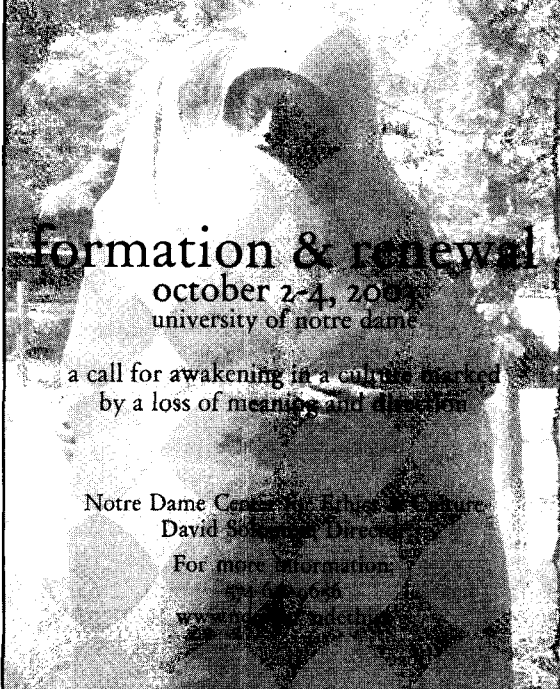
hood. But fairy tales generally need to avoid those kinds of specifics if they're going to keep their universality. The story of Little Red Riding Hood loses something when it begins: "On or about April 23, 1748, a vulpine suspect (a.k.a. 'Big Bad Wolf'; see cross-indexed casefiles 'Pigs, The Three Little' and 'Wolf, Peter and the') was observed feloniously entering a thatched-roof domicile in the Black Forest administrative region, in contravention of the Bavarian Public Safety and Control of Animals Act of 1694, section 2, subsection 3."

The specifics of this fairy tale set at the University of South Dakota revolve primarily around a Russian revolutionary named Sergei Degaev. That is, of course, an unlikely combination. St. Petersburg is a long way from Vermillion, and Degaev was, as it happens, an astonishingly slippery triple agent in Tsarist Russia who somehow managed to escape death despite doing such normally suicidal things as betraying to his fellow revolutionaries the names of the police agents to whom he had just betrayed his fellow revolutionaries—among

whom were several police agents masquerading as revolutionaries.

In a slim but marvelously written new book called *The Degaev Affair: Terror and Treason in Tsarist Russia*, Richard Pipes, the well-known historian of the Russian Revolution at Harvard, has gathered what little can be discovered about Degaev's life. The result is nearly indescribable. Imagine Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* rewritten as a farce or, even better, Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* retold as a fairy tale. There's a reason Pipes begins *The Degaev Affair* with an epigraph from Conrad: "For who, with us in Russia, is to tell a scoundrel from an exceptionally able man?"

IN FACT, THE LIFE of Sergei Degaev really is something of a fairy tale—a little murderous and bloody perhaps, but that's true of many of the best fairy tales. (See the police files on the famous "Little Red Riding Hood" case, for instance.) The only way to understand Degaev's life is to begin it with "Once upon a time"—and, really, that's the way his story starts: once upon a time, a man named Alexander Pell arrived in Vermillion, South



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J. BOTTUM is Books & Arts Editor at the Weekly Standard and Poetry Editor of FIRST THINGS.

Dakota, to take up his duties as a mathematics professor at the newly formed university of which the young state of South Dakota was so proud.

The forty-year-old scholar with a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins quickly made himself a fixture on campus. The school newspaper dubbed him

"Jolly Little Pell." The students of 1904 elected him their class "father" and told stories of his fighting alongside the students when supporters of another college's football team tried to steal the school colors. Along the way, Pell published in national and international mathematics journals

and managed to persuade the university's trustees in 1905 to start an engineering department, of which he became the first dean.

After the death of his first wife, he resigned from the university and married one of his students (who would live to become chair of the mathematics department at Bryn Mawr and one of America's leading women mathematicians). After teaching a few years at the Armour Institute in Chicago, Alexander Pell died in 1921, a mild, well-respected man—the recipient of a good and gentle life, beloved by his students and admired by his colleagues. His widow established a small mathematics scholarship at the University of South Dakota that continues to this day.

Of course, no one in Vermillion knew that jolly little Alexander Pell had started life as Sergei Degaev, the Russian revolutionary who, on December 16, 1883, achieved international fame for murdering Georgii Sudeikin, the all-powerful head of the Tsar's secret police.

ACTUALLY, HIS STORY is much worse than that, for Degaev agreed to undertake Sudeikin's murder only when his fellow revolutionaries in the "People's Will" movement discovered that he had already betrayed most of them to the police. And Sudeikin wasn't your usual run of secret policeman. He seems to have been, in fact, a determined reformist who had turned Degaev into a double agent in pursuit of a plan to use the People's Will to assassinate the minister of the interior, a royal governor, and several other people, all to turn himself into the new Rasputin and the power behind Alexander III's throne—from which position he imagined he could carry out many of the reforms the revolutionaries demanded.

The strangest part is how close Sudeikin came. His plan was reasonable enough, in those strange Russian days, that it may have been thwarted only by the fact that Degaev

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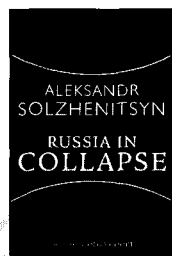
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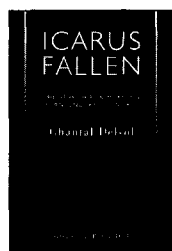
ICARUS FALLEN

The Search for Meaning in an Uncertain World

CHANTAL DELSOL

Translated by ROBIN DICK

\$25.00 (hc) 1-932236-04-X / 325 pp / September



It would be difficult to find a more perceptive description of Western man and the world he now inhabits than that provided by Chantal Delsol in *Icarus Fallen*. With style and lucidity, Delsol likens contemporary Western man to the mythical figure Icarus. During the twentieth century, Delsol argues, man flew too closely to the sun of utopian ideology. Having been burned, he is now groping for a way to orient himself.



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decided to save his own neck by assassinating his police patron. By turning Degaev into a triple agent and aiming him back at Sudeikin, the dying People's Will movement managed to eliminate its best chance to achieve some of its goals. But, then, "who, with us in Russia, is to tell a scoundrel from an exceptionally able man?" Neither the People's Will nor the Tsar's secret police ever entirely recovered from their experience of Sergei Degaev.

In *The Degaev Affair*, Richard Pipes insists that the People's Will movement has contemporary echoes. It was a group of educated young Russians who joined together in 1879 "for the specific purpose of assassinating the reigning Tsar, Alexander II," Pipes writes. (Degaev helped dig the tunnel used in one attempt; they succeeded at last with a thrown bomb in 1881.)

"It was the first organization in history dedicated to systematic political terrorism." He goes on to compare the movement with the Weathermen, the Baader-Meinhof gang, and even al-Qaeda. "People were condemned to death not for what they did but for what they were, namely, representatives of a regime regarded by its very nature to be criminal."

But Degaev's story doesn't actually need any immediate application to make it sell—for it is a fairy tale less about revolutionary politics than about what happens to revolutionary politics when it encounters someone like Degaev. Pipes is right that the murderous naiveté of the People's Will ought to remind us just how much blood always gets shed when innocents decide to set themselves above the law. But he was even more right to demote *Terror and Treason in*

Tsarist Russia to his subtitle and to take the man's name as his main title.

After Sudeikin's murder, Degaev managed to escape, first to Paris, then to London. Eventually, realizing that—contrary to his quite bizarre expectations—the revolutionary movement in Russia was not going to forgive his betrayals and elevate him as its greatest hero, he emigrated to St. Louis, where he found work as a superintendent at a chemical firm. Naturalized under the name "Alexander Pell" (for no as-yet understood reason), he studied in his spare time at Washington University—from which he was sent on to Baltimore for his doctorate. When the trustees of the University of South Dakota asked the Johns Hopkins professor Lorrain S. Hulburt to recommend a teacher, he answered, "Yes, I have a mathematician for you. He would get a

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good position almost anywhere here in the East were it not for the Russian brogue with which he speaks." Vermillion wired back, "Send your Russian mathematician along, brogue and all."

THE QUESTION at the center of Pipes' book is: "Which was the true Degaev-Pell: the kindly professor . . . or the revolutionary turncoat?" Was America different enough from Russia "to transform him into a different human being"? "Or perhaps was Joseph Conrad right in saying that the Russian personality is so enigmatic that a Westerner cannot hope to penetrate it?"

I tend toward the theory that Degaev was simply one of those people doomed to be a bad actor on a big stage and a good actor on a small one. For a revolutionary intellectual, it's hard to imagine a greater stage than St. Petersburg in those days, and Sergei Degaev seems to have ruined everyone whose life he touched there. It's hard to imagine a smaller stage than Vermillion, South Dakota, in those days, and Alexander Pell seems to have found, on those windswept Dakota plains, a measure of the gen-

teness and peace he once imagined only murder and revolution could bring about. That's the real moral of Richard Pipes' fairy tale.

BRIEFLY NOTED

ISLAM: A GUIDE FOR JEWS AND CHRISTIANS. By F. E. PETERS. *Princeton University Press*. 285 pp. \$28.

Clearly the reading public needs a book describing Islam that avoids trendy multiculturalism as well as Christian rejectionism. That is precisely what F. E. Peters provides in this lucid guide. Peters manifests all the virtues of clarity and fairness that come from a lifetime of study devoted to this complex and multifaceted religion. Most remarkably, Peters has also managed to describe Islam in a way that explains the religion to non-Muslims without offending Muslims by adopting the tone of an Enlightened "cultured despiser." He frankly admits, "The answer to the question 'Who composed the Quran, God or Muhammad?' is precisely the differ-

ence between Muslims and non-Muslims." But rather than address that bootless question directly, he concentrates on what Muhammad shared with his audience—both those who accepted and those who rejected his message in Mecca and Medina. And precisely by concentrating on that presumed background of shared understanding between believer and nonbeliever during Muhammad's life, Peters gives the non-Muslim the necessary background for understanding the Quran (he rightly says that no non-Muslim can understand Islam without reading the Quran from cover to cover). Without going so far as to call this Peters' most important or best book (he has written histories of Jerusalem and Mecca, monographs on Aristotle among the Arabs, and a three-volume comparison of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), it is his most accessible and salubrious work to date. As he writes on the last page: "I have spent half of my professional life trying to explain the hate and unravel the misunderstanding that pervades religious history and the other half attempting to describe the joy and sublimity that has often accompanied the worship of God. . . . [This approach] still seems to me the only worthwhile way of coming to terms with both the evil and the good that *humans* do in the name of God." Here is that most paradoxical of books: one that can change lives (and headlines), not by trying to convert, but simply by trying to describe.

—Edward T. Oakes, S.J.

TERROR AND LIBERALISM. By PAUL BERMAN. *Norton*. 214 pp. \$21.

Paul Berman is a prominent left-wing intellectual, and his new book, *Terror and Liberalism*, presents a passionate defense of the nation's war on terror (including its Iraqi front) in explicitly liberal terms. This in itself would be noteworthy. But Berman goes fur-



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ther, to castigate many of his fellow liberals for failing to recognize that militant Islam is the latest in a long line of death-obsessed antiliberal ideologies that, like fascism and communism before it, must be opposed with every resource—military, moral, intellectual—at our disposal. In his most original and enlightening chapters, Berman examines the writings of Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), the radical Egyptian philosopher who, in a series of painstaking commentaries on the Quran, recast Islam in terms largely derived from European antiliberalism and thus inspired the murderous armies of al-Qaeda and other groups. For Qutb, the enemy was Christianity and the secularized culture of the modern West it has spawned—and that in the modern age threatens to engulf the entire world. A nominal and impotent Islam may persist for a time in such a secular world, cordoned off in some “private” corner, but it will be an offense to God and all serious Muslims, who will recoil in humiliation at the “hideous schizophrenia” (Qutb’s phrase) of an Islam driven from public dominance. As Berman explains, Qutb believed that the only way to heal this psychic and social wound in the Muslim world was through “a rebellion in the name of Islam, against the liberal values of the West.” Berman would have liberals give in to their spontaneous inclination to be shocked by such antiliberal animus and endorse President Bush’s war on terror wholeheartedly. It is a bold and compelling proposal rendered all the more striking by the fact that, to the end, Berman insists that his “militant Wilsonian” views flow from an “American social-democratic heart.” Still, even those broadly sympathetic to his vision of fighting a war against militant Islam in the name of liberal traditions and institutions will find reasons to be cautious about the way that Berman conceives of it. Especially troubling is his hostility to foreign policy “realists” who

view international relations through the lens of power and national interest instead of absolute moral ideals. Berman is right to caution against those who champion *raison d’état*, since doing so can produce a narrow and amoral vision of the world in which such intangible motives for

war as honor, hatred, and humiliation (the three primary causes of strife in the Islamic world today) become inexplicable. Yet Berman rejects realist views not because of their potential to inspire foolishness but because he believes they are unsuited to the noble tasks to which

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we have been called by our present circumstances. Berman, it seems, is worried that realism's insistence on making policy decisions in the light of what is good for the United States will dampen our spirits and make us less inclined to fight for liberal principles. But surely a responsible foreign policy must combine moral considerations with reflection on the national interest. To deny a place for such reflection is to run the risk of encouraging the recklessness that frequently accompanies self-righteousness.

FOR THE GLORY OF GOD: HOW MONOTHEISM LED TO REFORMATIONS, SCIENCE, WITCH-HUNTS, AND THE END OF SLAVERY. By RODNEY STARK. Princeton University Press. 488 pp. \$35.

Stark, an influential sociologist of religion, might have chosen the title *The Book of Debunkings III*. Volumes one and two are his earlier *The Rise of Christianity* and *One True God*. The relentlessly contrarian, vigorously argued, and impressively documented argument is that scholars of the modern era have routinely discount-

ed and distorted the role of religion, and of monotheism in particular, in world history. The present volume continues the argument under four headings: God's truth, God's handiwork, God's enemies, and God's justice. Belief in the unity of God's truth explains the reformations (plural) and formation of sects in Christian history. These things did not happen in classical polytheism or the "godless" spiritualities of the East for the same reason that science did not develop in those worlds. Belief in the truth that the creation is God's handiwork generated the scientific progress that began not in the eighteenth century but in medieval scholasticism. Stark's discussion of science includes a succinct and convincing critique of the dogmatic materialism propounded by prominent evolutionists. The third part, "God's enemies," treats the outbreak of witch-hunting, concentrated in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which, contra conventional wisdom, resulted in thousands, not millions, of deaths of both men and women, and in which the Inquisition was typically a moderat-

ing influence. The belief in evil forces such as witchcraft, Stark contends, was the flip side of the unity of truth and commitment to reason, and was supported by Newton and many others revered by the Enlightenment. Witch-hunting was ended not by Enlightenment skepticism but by Christians protesting torture and other injustices entailed in the practice. Finally, "God's justice" explains why the near-universal institution of slavery was abolished under the influence of Christian morality, having been condemned by Christian thinkers and popes—sometimes with little effect upon temporal powers and slaveholders—for many centuries. (A major reason for slavery's survival in Islam, Stark says, is that Muhammad bought, sold, captured, and owned slaves.) On these and other questions, Stark's findings are sometimes so sympathetic to Catholicism that he early on makes a point of his not being a Roman Catholic. In a postscript titled "Gods, Rituals, and Social Science," Stark takes on a sociological tradition that, beginning with Durkheim, assumes that ritual rather than belief explains the influence of religion in society. Along the way, he also challenges Marxist and postmodern theorists with their sundry revisionisms that deny or relegate to epiphenomenal status the power of religion, notably of monotheism, in historical change. *For the Glory of God*, like the two earlier volumes, is an important book. It is immensely learned, consistently contentious, and filled with brilliant, if sometimes eccentric, insights. Its publication should create a furor, but that probably will not happen since the secularist prejudices it exposes are so deeply entrenched in the intellectual habits of modernity. Yet for those who are open to a very different interpretation of the development of Western Civilization—and the difference between the West and "the rest"—*For the Glory of God* is strongly recommended.

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THE RIGHTEOUS: THE UNSUNG HEROES OF THE HOLOCAUST. By MARTIN GILBERT. *Henry Holt*. 529 pp. \$35.

The distinguished British historian Martin Gilbert here brings together the remarkable stories of non-Jews who risked their lives and, in many cases, gave their lives in order to rescue Jews during the Holocaust. Unlike some other Jewish scholars, Gilbert celebrates their heroism without unseemly caveats about their implicit complicity in anti-Semitic cultures. Nearly twenty thousand non-Jews are honored as Righteous Gentiles in the Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem, and, as Gilbert notes, there were on average at least ten others who cooperated with each of those rescuers, also at the risk of their lives, by active assistance or simply by not reporting what they knew about rescue operations. The greatest number of rescuers by far were Polish Catholics, in large part because that is where the Nazi exterminationist program was pressed most fiercely. The question is raised but not pursued about the appropriateness of Yad Vashem honoring also Righteous Jews, but that touches on the awkward issue of other Jews who were not simply victims but who cooperated with their persecutors. Without entering into a detailed discussion of the alleged silence of Pius XII, Gilbert readily acknowledges the leading role of the Catholic Church—from the Pope to extraordinary nuns, priests, and monks—in protecting Jews. Gilbert's narrative is straightforward, moving from country to country and relating one individual story after another. The cumulative effect is overwhelming, a powerful witness to the human capacity for courage even in the heart of darkness. The book can be read along with the magnificent 1988 study by Samuel and Pearl Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe*. The Oliners provide a more analytical treatment of the phe-

nomenon, demonstrating that rescuers were typically ordinary Christians uncomplicatedly committed to the biblical imperative of love for neighbor. The story told by Gilbert and the Oliners can be employed to several purposes. To suggest that they are telling the "bright side" of the Holocaust is obscene. They do demonstrate that there is no horror that can completely extinguish the lights of goodness. And that, even under the most cruel totalitarian control, there is freedom for those who are prepared to die rather than cooperate in evil.

THE DISCOVERY OF GOD: ABRAHAM AND THE BIRTH OF MONOTHEISM. By DAVID KLINGHOFFER. *Doubleday*. 304 pp. \$26.

One might say that this book by a convert to Orthodox Judaism would better have been titled *The Discovery of Abraham*. But then, Abraham discovered God, or, more precisely, was the one to whom God revealed Himself. Klinghoffer discovers Abraham and God by a careful sifting through of the Jewish oral tradition that reaches back almost four thousand years and includes the stories and interpretations that went into the making of the Bible that Christians call the Old Testament. This is fascinating stuff that, joined to sundry archeological and other researches, will not be familiar to most readers. The detail sometimes overwhelms, but Klinghoffer's invitation to enter into strange worlds comes with the promise of sure rewards. While Christian interpretations, perhaps understandably, receive slight attention, the author ends with an unsentimental affirmation of faith that, despite all, "a grand if fractured Abrahamic civilization resting on its three foundations of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam" will one day be realized. "God's plan, the plan initiated by Abraham, is still being worked out. Not tomorrow.

Nor the day after. But eventually, inevitably." Whether that is one civilization with one religion or three is not entirely clear. Klinghoffer writes that "Catholic teaching now holds the Jewish and Christian relationships with God to be separate but equally valid," which is somewhat misleading. Relationships with God are finally something that God only knows, but Catholics and other Christians cannot say that Judaism, without an acknowledgment of Jesus as the Christ, is equally valid in conveying the fullness of the truth God has revealed. Such theological confusions notwithstanding, *The Discovery of God* will help Christians better understand the myriad events, stories, and beliefs that went into the making of Abraham, who in the eucharistic prayer of the Church is called "our father in faith."

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THE LANGUAGE POLICE. By DIANE RAVITCH. *Knopf*. 255 pp. \$24.

Sissy. Swarthy. Chick. Cattleman. Actress. Egghead. What those and thousands of other words have in common is that they are proscribed from textbooks used in public schools. Diane Ravitch is one of the most astute students of contemporary educational practices, and she here offers a withering critique of the "sensitivity" and "inclusivity" dogmas that have bowdlerized, sometimes hilariously, even literary classics in public schools. The language police are overwhelmingly on the left, but she gets in some deserved whacks at right-wingers and real-wingers who have their own list of forbidden references. The chief guilt, says Ravitch, lies with publishers who are terrified of the impact on sales if they offend anyone. But it is clear that none of this nonsense could be perpetrated were it not for librarians, teachers unions, school boards, and others—usually the most vocal opponents of censorship—who have been imposing a system of censorship for years.

THE WORM IN THE APPLE: HOW THE TEACHERS UNIONS ARE DESTROYING AMERICAN EDUCATION. By PETER BRIMELOW. *HarperCollins*. 322 pp. \$24.95.

A lively and frequently polemical

(deservedly so) elaboration of the subtitle. That doesn't mean one doesn't need to read the book. On the contrary, the details mustered by Brimelow provide also the directions toward remedy. But first we need to really hear the bad news: how teachers unions protect truly bad teachers, how they control the school boards with which they negotiate their contracts, how they fight tooth and nail to prevent students, especially of poor families, from having a choice of schools, and how they defend frequently rotten school systems—big city school systems in particular—from the competition that could lead to genuine reform. *The Worm in the Apple* is a manifesto that, if taken to heart, could help move millions of children into the adventure of learning.

FROM JUDGMENT TO PASSION: DEVOTION TO CHRIST AND THE VIRGIN MARY, 800-1200. By RACHEL FULTON. *Columbia University Press*. 676 pp. \$40.

The author teaches history at the University of Chicago and here brings together an astonishing range of materials illuminating the development of high medieval devotion to the suffering Christ and Mary's participation in the redemptive act of the cross. Her stated thesis, that the development hinged on the disappointment of eschatological expectations surrounding the millennium of Christ's death in 1033, gets lost in the massiveness of the texts discussed, but the book nonetheless provides a richly informative tour of the imaginative, impassioned, and sometimes erotic dimensions of empathic identification with the passion. Marian devotion relative to the suffering of her son far predates the Christian conquest of the Franks with which Fulton begins her story, but she admirably displays the flowering of that devotion as it still flourishes in much Catholic piety today.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HERESY. By G. R. EVANS. *Blackwell*. 195 pp. \$17.95 paper.

This is one in a series of Blackwell books aimed at providing short, accessible, and engaging treatments of theological and religious subjects for "the common reader." It is a worthy project that deserves better than this once-over-lightly survey of heresy in the Christian tradition. The author, a Cambridge historian, is both superficial and slanted in her benign view of the heretic as a kind of whistleblower who helps us to be more "tolerant" in obedience to what the World Council of Churches prescribes as "unity in diversity." The temper of the times, she suggests, requires a sharply tempered devotion to truth.

THE GROWING SEASONS: AN AMERICAN BOYHOOD BEFORE THE WAR. By SAMUEL HYNES. *Viking*. 291 pp. \$24.95.

It is not true that nostalgia is not what it used to be. Hynes, professor of literature at Princeton, tells the story of his richly ordinary boyhood in the Midwest and does so without either complaint or gilding. The war in the subtitle is, of course, World War II, and the book helps us understand the world that produced what is now often called "the greatest generation." From a boy's sexual curiosity to his envy of Catholic friends who appeared to have a much more interesting religion, *The Growing Seasons* evokes a time when the limits and possibilities of life were explored with fewer pretentious complexifications. Call it a simpler time. Or simply more honest.

IS THE FATHER OF JESUS THE GOD OF MUHAMMAD? By TIMOTHY GEORGE. *Zondervan*. 159 pp. \$12.99 paper.

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Samford University offers an informed and accessible account of differences and similarities between Christianity and Islam. While he is attentive to other Christian communities, George is particularly alert to the beliefs and concerns of evangelical Protestantism, including the commitment to world evangelization. The answer to the title's question is yes, in the sense that there is but one God, but also no, in the sense that Christians know God as one in three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This little book is an admirably concise primer for the rapidly growing number of Christians who have only recently been awakened to the challenge of Islam.

HELLFIRE NATION: THE POLITICS OF SIN IN AMERICAN HISTORY. By JAMES A. MORONE. *Yale University Press*. 560 pp. \$35.

Morone pits the "Puritans" and "Progressives" against one another and depicts, in a frequently sensationalistic manner, the fervor of their moralistic battles over witches, slavery, woman's suffrage, and alcohol, all issuing in today's conflicts over drugs, sex, homosexuality, and abortion. He makes an interesting point that the "Progressive" support for abortion on the basis of privacy rights may be a mistake because it leaves questions of public morality to the opposition. As a history of moralities in conflict, however, *Hellfire Nation* is tendentious and, well, overheated.

THE RUSSIAN CHURCH AND THE PAPACY. By VLADIMIR SOLOVIEV. *Catholic Answers*. 203 pp. \$11.95 paper.

The philosopher Soloviev (1853-1900) has been called "the Russian Newman" and has been cited favorably in the teaching documents of John Paul II. He was a powerful influence on, among many others, Dostoevsky and is a continuing point of reference in discussions about the relations between Eastern and Western Christianity. The present pope, more than any of his predecessors, has made extraordinary efforts to advance the reconciliation of East and West, which makes the republication of this classic in abridged form particularly timely. While he shared many Eastern criticisms of the papacy over the centuries, Soloviev makes an intellectually compelling and poetically moving argument for Christian unity in communion with the See of Peter.

SAME-SEX ATTRACTION: A PARENTS' GUIDE. Edited by JOHN F. HARVEY and GERARD V. BRADLEY. *St. Augustine's*. 227 pp. \$25 paper.

"No problem, honey. You just be what you got to be." Few parents would respond so insouciantly to their teenager's announcement that he is gay. Or, of those who did, few would mean it. This is a book that many people, and not only parents, have been waiting for. With exquisite sensitivity, combined with moral clarity and a command of the facts, fourteen authors address same-sex

attraction under the headings of science and medicine, morality, law, and pastoral considerations. Faced with pro-homosexual pressures in education and the general culture, always advanced under the banner of tolerance, many parents and others are at a loss in knowing how to respond. *Same-Sex Attraction* supplies the necessary facts and arguments but, equally important, a positive vision of sexuality that makes for human flourishing.

OFFICE OF INNOCENCE. By THOMAS KENEALLY. *Doubleday*. 272 pp. \$25.

A young priest in Australia begins his ministry during World War II as the Japanese are threatening to invade the country. He is an innocent on many scores, and the story is about his loss of innocence in ways related to the "office of innocence"—the confessional. Keneally displays a convincing feel for the clerical life, and some will find this entertainment just the thing for a little light reading.

MEANINGLESSNESS: THE SOLUTIONS OF NIETZSCHE, FREUD, AND RORTY. By M. A. CASEY. *Lexington*. 168 pp. \$22.95 paper.

A profound examination of meaninglessness in human life—and above all, of the unhelpful attempts by modern thinkers such as Nietzsche, Freud, and Rorty to devise a therapy that will protect us from it.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

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IN LIEU OF MEMOIRS

I don't know what to call this. It is certainly not, in any ordinary sense of the word, a review of Robert Louis Wilken's new book *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (Yale University Press, 368 pp., \$29.95). A reviewer is supposed to have a measure of critical distance from the author and book under discussion, and I am anything but distanced from Wilken. Apart from my family, he is my friend of longest standing. We go back to college days in Austin, Texas, we went through seminary together in St. Louis, and we have been in unbroken conversation ever since. To complicate matters further, the book is dedicated to our friendship. So don't expect from me what is usually meant by objectivity in the reviewing business. This is in part the discharging of a debt, or, better, call it an appreciation. And I take it as an occasion to reflect on the indispensable part that friendship plays in one's personal and intellectual formation. As it happens, that theme is also close to the argument of *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*.

From time to time it is suggested to me—and not always, I think, in the way of flattery—that I should write my memoirs or even a full-scale autobiography. Perhaps some day I will, although I rather doubt it. Were I ever to do so, it would be in very large part the story of my gratitude for the people who have shaped my mind and way of being in the world. So herewith, before I return to Robert Louis Wilken, some rough notes in lieu of the memoirs that will likely never be written. I limit myself to intellectuals and writers,

recognizing that the influence of innumerable other friends, also intellectually, would require a large book. Those mentioned are people without whose influence I would not think the way I think or live the way I live. They are my teachers, people to whom I intellectually surrendered myself, which is the only way to learn. Each left an indelible mark. With some I am now in decided disagreement. To others I regularly return to learn more, or to relearn what I had forgotten.

In compiling this list, I soon realized it was getting impossibly long. Rigorously, and reluctantly, I pruned and then pruned again. The final criterion was this: these are the thinkers who are essential to the telling of my life's story. The omission of any would result in missing an influence without which I could not understand myself. Others might have been included; those included could not have been excluded. And a final caveat: we will not know the whole of the who and what in the formation of what we think we know until we know even as we are known, which is not yet.

I am not entirely satisfied with my list. After all, one could go through one's personalized version of the Great Books or of Matthew Arnold's "the best that has been thought and said" and be compelled to acknowledge that, in ways not always obvious, one would be a different person if he had never read, for instance, Plato, Descartes, or Alasdair MacIntyre. But I mean to limit myself to powerfully felt influences, to intensely personal engagements (whether or not I knew the thinker personally), to encounters that were "aha experiences" of an acutely conscious and continuing nature. I mention first thinkers whom I did not know personally, and then those whom I did, some of whom are still alive and still dear friends. I leave off the list biblical writers, only noting for the record that the four evangelists, along with Paul, the prophets, and the writers of the psalms—probably in that order, and as is probably the case for most Christians—are formative beyond any possible comparison.

So here we go. The names are not necessarily in order of importance. Each deserves an essay or more, but I offer only a sentence or two, which does no more than gesture at the nature of the influence. My list and

what I say about each is, I readily acknowledge, not always terribly original, but it is mine. And then I will get back to Robert Louis Wilken.

St. Augustine: The master teacher of thinking faith and faithful thinking. *St. Thomas Aquinas*: Uncompromising champion of bringing all knowledge into obedience to Christ. Almost, from time to time, I am disposed to call myself a Thomist. *Martin Luther*: Possessed prophet of the utter gratuitousness of salvation. *John Henry Newman*: How we know what we know that we dare to trust. *Josef Pieper*: The wisdom of Thomas distilled and illuminated by life as lived. *Samuel Johnson*: The courage to see and say the obvious. *Friedrich Schleiermacher*: The brilliant but finally wrongheaded freedom of thought disengaged from authority. *Émile Durkheim*: Society as the bearer of mystery. *William James*: The futility of denying transcendence. *Michael Polanyi*: The impossibility of the autonomous and systematically skeptical mind. *Hans Urs von Balthasar*: Intellectual and spiritual genius at play in the fields of the Lord. *Fedor Dostoevsky*: The prophet of the fiery word pitted against the fiery sword that blocks the way to Eden. *Søren Kierkegaard*: The contriver of introspective knots from which we are freed by truth not our own. *John Courtney Murray*: The Catholic Thing made critically at home in America. *Louis Bouyer*: Faith lived as liturgy. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*: Relentlessly probing what it means to follow Him. *Flannery O'Connor*: Vocation discovered in the grace of being limited. *G. K. Chesterton*: Unbounded gratitude in the wonder of what is.

Then there are those whom I have been blessed to know personally, in some cases casually but in most over years and in the conversation of friendship. *Arthur Carl Piepkorn*: There is no gospel apart from the Church. More pointedly, the Church is integral to the gospel. *Wolfgang Pannenberg*: Christian knight of Enlightenment rationality besting Enlightenment rationality at its own game. *Abraham Joshua Heschel*: He opened the Torah to reveal to me, but not to him, the Christ. *Peter L. Berger*: The sociology of thinking. *Martin Luther King, Jr.*: Pressing politics as the art of what might be possible. *Reinhold Niebuhr*: Uncompromising analyst of a grim world qualified by grace. *Paul Ramsey*: Happy contrarian captive to thinking clearly about doing the right thing. *Karol Wojtyła*: All truth is personal, and in the Truth, the person of Christ, we are revealed to ourselves. *Avery Dulles*: A magisterial command of the tradition making him a contemporary touchstone of reflective orthodoxy.

So there you have it, the short list; rough notes for the intellectual memoirs that will likely never be written. The list is eclectic, no doubt, and the less charitable might call it a hodgepodge. But then, life is eclectic and something of a hodgepodge. There are

other thinkers, and especially individual books, that have turned around my thinking on this or that subject of consequence. Other contemporaries might have been included, but neither they nor I think of themselves as my teachers, and there are simply too many of them. I am also conscious of short-changing literary figures—novelists, dramatists, poets. Composers, too. The above canon of influentials is heavy on theology and philosophy, also on moral philosophy. But then, so am I. So I let the list, with its no doubt too allusive explanatory tags, stand as it is for the time being. Everything is for the time being.

The Strange New World of the Fathers

It goes without saying that Robert Louis Wilken—he started using the “Louis” after he became a Catholic, in honor of the thirteenth-century king of France, patron of his native city of New Orleans—would be on the list were it expanded only slightly. Wilken is not my teacher in the usual meaning of the word, but he is a friend who has taught me much. It is said of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth that he opened for many “the strange new world of the Bible.” Wilken has opened for many the strange new world of the Church Fathers. He taught patristics for years at Catholic institutions, notably at the University of Notre Dame, and since 1985 has been William R. Kenan Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Virginia.

There is a discernible trajectory of development over the years in his many books and articles (some of the latter appearing in these pages). The new book prompted me to go back and look at *The Myth of Christian Beginnings* (1971). The thesis there is that there was for the Christian movement no biblical Golden Age from which subsequent history is a declension or by which subsequent history is to be judged. With specific reference to the patristic era, the argument is that the movement, also doctrinally, is one of development pointing toward an eschatological denouement. The eschatological accent was attributable in significant part to the influence of Wolfgang Pannenberg. Thirty years later, Wilken has not retracted that thesis, nor does he suggest that the biblical or patristic era was a Golden Age after all, but he is inclined to contend that the early Fathers got “the Christian intellectual tradition” (a favored phrase) right, and that that tradition is inseparably tied to the interpretation of the Bible. *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* does not suggest that the patristic era represents the whole of the tradition. Not by a long shot. But it is a notably energetic, imaginative, and faithful part of the tradition to which Wilken has devoted a life of study. The conclusion of the book puts it nicely:

The intellectual tradition that began in the early Church was enriched by the philosophical breadth and exactitude of medieval thought. Each period in Christian history makes its own unique contribution to Christian life. The Church Fathers, however, set in place a foundation that has proven to be irreplaceable. Their writings are more than a stage in the development of Christian thought or an interesting chapter in the history of the interpretation of the Bible. Like an inexhaustible spring, faithful and true, they irrigate the Christian imagination with life-giving water flowing from the biblical and spiritual sources of the faith. They are still our teachers today.

The book fully vindicates that judgment. Although, truth to tell, I expect an essay by Wilken on the “unique contribution” of the modern era to the Christian intellectual tradition would be short and marked by deep ambivalence. An argument at the heart of *The Spirit* and Wilken’s other writings of recent years is that the thought we call modern is—unlike the Fathers and the classical world of philosophy of which they were part—marked by systematic skepticism and a posture of critical distance in the interpretation of sacred texts. Like the Greeks, the Fathers understood that commitment—as in faith and love—is essential to discerning the truth. Indeed, love is a way of knowing. In this connection and others, Wilken decisively rejects the powerfully influential complaint of Adolf Harnack (1851-1930) that the Fathers were guilty of “Hellenizing” Christian thought. The Fathers’ appropriation of Greek philosophy, and their success in bringing it into obedience to the history of Israel and its Christ is, according to Wilken, precisely their genius and their glory.

Whether in understanding the Greeks or in interpreting the Bible, the serious interpreter must give himself to the author. On this Wilken effectively cites T. S. Eliot: “You don’t really criticize any author to whom you have never surrendered yourself. . . . You have to give yourself up, and then recover yourself, and the third moment is having something to say, before you have wholly forgotten both surrender and recovery.” But is it possible for a modern to so surrender himself, to entrust himself to love as a way of knowing? Does that not inevitably end up in a form of fideism? Although the above-mentioned Michael Polanyi is not named in the book, Wilken’s answer, at least implicitly, is very much like Polanyi’s proposal for a “post-critical philosophy.” Also unmentioned, but very much between the lines, is Paul Ricoeur’s understanding of the “second naiveté” that is on the far side of systematic skepticism.

Wilken does invoke in his opening pages the words of Augustine: “No one believes anything unless one first thought it believable. Everything that is believed is believed after being preceded by thought. Not everyone who thinks believes, since many think in order not to believe; but everyone who believes thinks, thinks in believing and believes in thinking.” Wilken, however, does not understand himself to be writing a systematic treatise on the relationship between faith and reason. “Although I deal with ideas and arguments, I am convinced that the study of early Christian thought has been too preoccupied with ideas.” And, he might have added, not only early Christian thought. Christianity is about history, about what happened and is happening, about a way of life constructed by such events remembered, related, and reenacted. Christianity is a Church, a community, indeed a culture, created by truth discerned through commitment, which is to say by faith. Christianity is, as Wilken repeatedly says, the *res*, the things—especially the sacramental, devotional, moral, and intellectual things—that constitute The Christian Thing. We must give ourselves to the *res*. Critical distancing, and especially irony, are, in relation to the things of God, blasphemy.

The distinguished church historian Jaroslav Pelikan says of the book: “By turns scholarly, contemplative, and argumentative, this is an exposition in which the early Christian writers speak for themselves—and to us.” I don’t want to overinterpret a book blurb, but Pelikan’s use of the word “argumentative” is insightful. Although Wilken has been heaped with academic honors over the years, I have long thought he is not sufficiently appreciated by contemporary Christian thinkers. One reason for that, I expect, is that readers do not see the arguments he is making in the stories that he tells. Wilken is a stranger to polemic or pointed attack. His style is understated; absent are the fireworks of intellectual showmanship. He writes in a manner that is disarmingly, and sometimes deceptively, simple. The tone is invitational, as though he is saying, “Come and see. Let me show you a way of being Christian and thinking Christianly that is richer, more imaginative, more convincing, more faithful than the way in which most of us are Christian today.”

And so it is that, if anybody ever bothers to write about my life and thought, he will have to write about the people named above, and he will have to write about Robert Louis Wilken. Get *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* and read it. Read it slowly, letting Wilken take you by the hand to enter into conversation with Augustine, Cyprian, Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, and others; all of whom got The Christian Thing right. That doesn’t mean that nobody except the early Fathers got it right, and it certainly doesn’t mean that they exhausted the ways of

getting it right. It is still and always the case that the truth is discerned and lived against an eschatological horizon. But Wilken loves the Fathers and their way of loving Christ. In asking the reader to come and see, he is, like St. Paul, introducing the great hymn of love that is the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. Paul says, and Robert Louis Wilken says, "Let me show you a more excellent way." Let him show you a more excellent way.

FT

WAR IN A NEW ERA

If it's worth doing, it's worth overdoing. That appears to be the operative maxim in some quarters where folks have been gleefully burying under an ever-growing mountain of ridicule some of the more reckless opponents of U.S. action in Iraq. Not that there isn't a great deal to ridicule. Leading up to the invasion and even after its rapid military success, critics were predicting a quagmire, a Somalia-like debacle, a rising of the Arab "street" that would be "a storm from hell," and, of course, another Vietnam. With reference to civilian casualties, some protestors spoke about a "Middle East holocaust." None of that happened. In view of the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis killed by Saddam's murderous regime, the war probably saved innumerable lives. So the critics were abysmally wrong on almost every point. That must be clearly established on the public record.

On the question of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction (WMD), one of the several justifications offered for military action, all the returns are not yet in. Over the past decade, the Security Council of the UN, supported by the intelligence services of all the major nations, said he had WMDs. Maybe he did destroy them but refused to say so lest he lose face by appearing to buckle under UN demands. Maybe they are still hidden and will yet be found. More troubling, maybe all the intelligence services were wrong. That is troubling not because it raises questions about the liberation of Iraq but because it raises questions about our intelligence capacities in dealing with similar problems in the future.

The aftermath of the Iraqi intervention is a time for all of us to think anew about conventional wisdoms regarding war, peace, and global security. To take but one instance, for decades, ever since the first use of the atom bomb against Japan, it has been a staple in arguments about "just war" that weapons of ever more

destructive power have made obsolete the traditional criterion of "proportionality" between a just cause and the cost of vindicating that cause by military means. In his speech announcing victory in Iraq, President Bush made an observation that deserves the careful attention of serious students of the ethics of war and peace.

[We] have witnessed the arrival of a new era. For a hundred years of war, culminating in the nuclear age, military technology was designed and deployed to inflict casualties on an ever-growing scale. In defeating Nazi Germany and imperial Japan, Allied forces destroyed entire cities, while enemy leaders who started the conflict were safe until the final days. Military power was used to end a regime by breaking a nation. Today, we have the greater power to free a nation by breaking a dangerous and aggressive regime. With new tactics and precision weapons, we can achieve military objectives without directing violence against civilians. No device of man can remove the tragedy from war. Yet it is a great advance when the guilty have far more to fear from war than the innocent.

This is indeed a great advance. Without entering into the much-disputed question of whether the World War II obliteration bombing of Hamburg, Dresden, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki was morally justifiable, everyone can agree that it is a very good thing that the U.S. did not, to use Churchill's phrase, "bounce the rubble" of Baghdad. Those who predicted hundreds of thousands of deaths in Iraq should have known better. The strategy made possible by precision weaponry was already on display in the Gulf War of 1991 and in Afghanistan in 2001-02. The claim that modern weaponry has made obsolete the proportionality criterion in evaluating the justice of war should now be permanently retired. It is true that terrorists and rogue nations may possess and use nuclear and biochemical weapons of massive and indiscriminate destruction, but they operate outside of and in defiance of the tradition of just war reflection. Not only in the context of the last hundred years, but in the context of human history, it is a genuinely new thing that "the guilty have far more to fear from war than the innocent."

This certainly does not make warfare morally unproblematic. Some predicted that even the most discriminate and precise military action in Iraq would trigger the use of biochemical weapons by Saddam, resulting in the death of countless Iraqis and coalition forces. That did not happen, but it was not unreasonable to fear that it might happen. This was among the many calculated risks in which the

judgment of those leading the coalition was vindicated, for which we should be deeply grateful. Also morally problematic is the possibility that pinpoint accuracy in warfare may make military action seem too easy. As he has many times before, in the above-mentioned speech President Bush again declared that military action is the “last resort” in addressing threats to the U.S. and world security.

He also said, “Yet all can know, friend and foe alike, that our nation has a mission: we will answer threats to our security and we will defend the peace.” In accomplishing that mission, last resort has never meant the very last thing that can be done in order to avoid conflict. After all, one can always surrender. The “resort” in question refers to available means for countering aggression and securing a more just peace. In view of the changes in technology and strategy, applying the criterion of proportionality may, in some prescribed circumstances, move us toward thinking about military action in terms not of the last resort but of the best resort. If the question is how to achieve a just goal while inflicting minimal damage, especially to innocents, the answer may sometimes be military action. That, too, is not morally unproblematic. But, for both waging war and thinking about war, it is a prospect entailed in understanding that “we have witnessed the arrival of a new era.”

FT

HAERESIS AS DOCTRINAL CHOICE

Thomas Oden is one of the prime movers in the “confessional movement” to reclaim catholic substance for oldline Protestantism. He is also a key participant in the project known as Evangelicals and Catholics Together. In his recent book *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy* (HarperSanFrancisco, 212 pp., \$24.95) he strongly affirms the Vincentian canon set forth by Vincent of Lerin (d. circa 450). Oden renders the canon this way: “In the worldwide community of believers every care should be taken to hold fast to what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all.”

Roger E. Olson teaches theology at Baylor University, a Baptist institution, and he has his reservations. He writes: “We must remain open to the possibility that the Word of God—not some new revelation or personal opinion—may correct or supplement what the Church has always believed. Otherwise we must condemn Luther, for surely his

doctrine of justification (*simul justus et peccator*) cannot be found within the consensual teaching of the Church before him (at least he did not think so, nor do most contemporary historical theologians). For that matter, can one find Wesley’s doctrine of *entire sanctification in a moment* in the consensual tradition? What about the Synod of Dort’s doctrine of *limited atonement*? Most significant for many evangelicals is that one cannot find *believer baptism only* (including ‘rebaptism’ of persons already baptized in the triune name as infants) in the consensual tradition as Oden defines it. In fact, Baptists should note, Oden sides with Pope Stephen I against the Donatists in condemning ‘rebaptism’ (a term no group uses for its own practice) and declares, ‘When an unprecedented claim on such an important subject as baptism stands in direct contrast to the previous consensual memory, it has to be rejected promptly and firmly. . . . After Stephen’s prompt response to the practice of rebaptism, the historical precedent was reconfirmed so conclusively that the issue was seldom reviewed again until much later.’ Oden does not tell us what he thinks about the outcome of that later ‘review.’ Are Baptists heretics? He does not say it, but it would seem so by Vincent’s canon and Oden’s logic. If not, why could there not be contemporary steps away from the ancient, consensual tradition of the Church insofar as they can be established by appeal to Scripture and not to private opinion, philosophy, or culture? In matters of theological examination of Christian teachings old and new the ancient, consensual tradition of the Church gets a strong vote but not an absolute veto.”

In sum, if St. Vincent and Oden are right, much of Protestantism is wrong, and that can’t be right. That puts Olson’s complaint a bit too simply, but only a bit. These are knotty questions that will not be untangled anytime soon. Thomas Oden is no doubt well aware that the Vincentian canon does not mean that there was ever a time when every single Christian or group of Christians believed exactly the same thing about everything. In the early centuries of the Church, there were maddeningly diverse and often conflicting beliefs on core issues such as the human and divine natures of Christ, the unity and trinity of God, and much else. That is why there were disputes, synods, and councils in which the tradition of identifiable continuity appealed—before there was agreement on which texts constituted the New Testament of Scriptures—to the authority of the apostles and apostolic churches. This early came to be called the “rule of faith” (*regula fidei*), of which St. Vincent’s formula is one expression.

Adjudication of differences by appeal to the rule of faith continues to this day in all Christian communions that intend to be catholic, and is, of course, most carefully observed in the churches called Catholic and

Orthodox. It is easy to say that “the Word of God—not some new revelation or personal opinion—may correct or supplement what the Church has always believed,” but it is in fact the opinion of a person or group of persons *about* the Word of God that is set against the continuing tradition. This is what John Henry Newman called the tyranny of “private judgment,” which is not unlike heresy—from *haeresis*, meaning choice. As I say, these are questions that have been with the Church from the beginning, and metastasized into numerous institutional divisions in the sixteenth century. They will not be resolved by Thomas Oden’s *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, but his argument points toward what may, please God, be a resolution one day. It deserves a better response than the charge that it implicitly indicts the departures from historic Christianity that many people cherish.

 FT

CATHOLICS, PROTESTANTS, AND THE MEANINGS OF FREEDOM

There are many books on the history of anti-Catholicism in America, but the achievement of John T. McGreevy, a historian at Notre Dame, is in making a persuasive argument, supported by detailed and original research, that helps explain the underlying conflict of ideas, experiences, and sensibilities that has made America from the founding to the present day so hospitable and, at the same time, so hostile to Catholicism. I have discussed earlier (“Something Like, Just Maybe, a Catholic Moment,” *Public Square*, May 2001) McGreevy’s important article on twentieth-century anti-Catholicism in the American academy, published in the *Journal of American History*. Much more ambitious and comprehensive is his new book, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (Norton, 431 pp., \$26.95). One may not be persuaded on every point but, all in all, this is the most informative, analytically insightful, and even-handed account we have of the troubled relationship between Catholicism and the American experiment. It is also a pleasure to read.

In the beginning, from the Puritan commonwealth in Massachusetts to the founding of the Republic, Catholicism was viewed—not always for the same reasons—as alien and threatening. Almost everybody viewed Catholicism with suspicion, although not all saw it as an immediate danger. Alexander Hamilton, for

instance, urged that New York give Catholics full voting rights in 1787, noting the “little influence possessed by the Pope in Europe” and arguing against the needless “vigilance of those who would bring engines to extinguish fire which had many days subsided.” The monolithic and authoritarian Church that his compatriots feared, he said, was a thing of the past. Many, one may note, make the same argument today, pointing to the “liberalization” of Catholicism following the Second Vatican Council. Then and now, many other Americans are not persuaded.

The nub of the dispute, McGreevy contends, is the tension, if not contradiction, “between Catholic and American ideas of freedom.” That tension was first voiced in the 1840s when European immigration made Catholicism the largest religious group in America and “it moves from nineteenth-century debates over education, slavery, and nationalism to twentieth- and twenty-first century discussions of social welfare policy, democracy, birth control, abortion, and sexual abuse.” The difference was and is between freedom as “ordered liberty” and freedom as the autonomous individual’s right to choose. A nineteenth-century Catholic editor contrasted liberals and Catholics: “They say that true liberty is a freedom from right as well as from wrong; we assert that it is a freedom only from wrong.” Or, as the Catholic Lord Acton would have it, freedom is not the freedom to do what we want but to do as we ought. From the beginning, Catholic thinkers in both Rome and the U.S. made the argument that the American founding—with its emphasis on natural law, natural rights, and higher law—was perfectly consonant with the Catholic understanding of freedom. In his 1888 encyclical promoting Thomism, Leo XIII declared, “The true liberty of human society does not consist in every man doing what he pleases [but] supposes the necessity of obedience to some supreme and eternal law.” More than a hundred years later, Catholics still contend that that proposition is perfectly consonant with what Father John Courtney Murray, in his 1960 book of essays *We Hold These Truths*, called the “American Proposition.”

An Ignorant and Squalid People

An earlier Puritan and Calvinist tradition also stressed a higher law, the sovereignty of God, and communal fidelity to truth. As Michael Novak has conclusively demonstrated in his recent book, *On Two Wings*, such convictions were much stronger during the founding era than most accounts allow. But by the mid-nineteenth century, such convictions clashed with developments in liberal Protestant theology. In the North, influential figures such as William Ellery Channing, Horace Bushnell, George Cheever, and

Theodore Parker unfurled the banners of an optimistic, this-worldly Christianity, and were most particularly hostile to any idea of authority, sin, or redemptive suffering. The way of the cross was to be replaced by the way of individual self-realization and social reform. From his socially eminent pulpit, Theodore Parker described the waves of Catholic immigration as composed of “ignorant and squalid people, agape for miracles, ridden by their rulers and worse ridden by their priests, met to adore some relic of a saint.”

Parker was not the exception but represented the liberal consensus when he declared in 1854: “The Roman Catholic Church claims infallibility for itself, and denies spiritual freedom, liberty of mind or conscience, to its members. It is therefore the foe of all progress; it is deadly hostile to democracy. She is the natural ally of tyrants and the irreconcilable enemy of freedom. Individual Catholics in America, as elsewhere, are inconsistent, and favor the progress of mankind. Alas! Such are the exceptional; the Catholic Church has an iron logic, and consistently hates liberty in all its forms—free thought, free speech.” So also in many quarters today, allowances are made for “inconsistent” Catholics, the rule being that the only good Catholic is a bad Catholic. They are tolerable despite their being Catholic. Indeed, in their defiance of or indifference to the Church, they are praiseworthy. But, in this view, the “iron logic” of Catholicism has not changed.

Catholicism and American Freedom, however, is not just about anti-Catholicism. It is not to be read as another telling of the story well told by Philip Jenkins in his recent *The New Anti-Catholicism* (which, as McGreevy would have it, is really very old). McGreevy wants to explain how Catholicism understood itself, and was understood, and how that, in turn, helps explain the religious, cultural, and political situation of Catholicism in America today. Anti-Catholicism explains part of it, but then one must explain anti-Catholicism. Of course, there were the centuries of anti-Catholic Protestant theological polemics—returned in good measure by anti-Protestant Catholic theological polemics—but in America’s public square the great issue was freedom. McGreevy’s title is no doubt to be taken as a play on Paul Blanshard’s explosive anti-Catholic best-seller of 1949, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*. The conflict was not between freedom and power, however. Those who viewed Catholicism as a threat had the power. The real conflict was between very different ideas of freedom.

Slavery and Freedom

The mid-nineteenth century witnessed a “Catholic revival” in Europe, with both ultramontane and liberal

wings. Notable among the liberals were, in France, Charles Montalembert and Bishop Felix Dupanloup, along with Ignaz von Döllinger in Germany, and Lord Acton, Richard Simpson, and John Henry Newman in England. In this country, Orestes Brownson pressed the liberal direction, urging the “Americanization” of Catholicism, meaning mainly immigrant Irish Catholicism. McGreevy calls Brownson “the most influential American Catholic intellectual of the nineteenth century.” (See Peter Augustine Lawler, “Orestes Brownson and the Truth About America,” FT, December 2002.) Decisive for the future of Catholicism, however, was the issue of slavery. Alignments formed in the 1850s continue to influence the public position of Catholicism to the present day.

Catholics were ambivalent about slavery. But so, then, were most Americans. The abolitionist agitators in the North were a distinct minority and were viewed as dangerous radicals. This is easily forgotten today. Moreover, the abolitionists, drawn mainly from the brahmin class, were also the most stridently anti-Catholic, a factor that was not lost on Catholics. From saints in the Middle Ages through popes during the time of New World discoveries, the Catholic Church had condemned chattel slavery as intrinsically evil. Catholics, along with a majority of Americans in the North, including leaders such as Abraham Lincoln, thought slavery to be an evil, but they were not persuaded that abolition was the remedy. Nor did it seem to Catholics and many others that slavery was the greatest evil afflicting American society.

Catholic ambivalence about slavery is sometimes explained by the fear of Irish immigrants, who were at the bottom of the economic ladder, that freed slaves would be unwelcome competition in the labor market, and that was no doubt a factor. Today some explain the ambivalence by reference to racism. While that, too, was no doubt a factor, McGreevy writes, “In fact, the Vatican’s insistence on the validity of interracial marriage and its opposition to rigid segregation laws made Roman authorities relatively tolerant of racial mixing and opposed to biological notions of racial inferiority.” When in 1861 a Louisiana bishop wrote a pastoral letter adopting the slaveholders’ view on race, he was sharply censured by Rome. The Roman congregation rejected the claim of “a natural difference between the Negroes whom he calls children of Canaan, and the Whites who he says are the privileged ones of the great human family.” African-American slaves, the Vatican insisted, are an integral part of the human family saved by Jesus Christ, not simply, as the bishop said, “poor children.”

Catholics would not have become Democrats prior to the Civil War if anti-Catholics had not rallied to the new Republican Party. By the mid-1850s, the

Republicans had replaced the Whig Party and the explicitly anti-Catholic American Party as the chief rival to the Democrats. This ensured “that a broad array of [Republican] politicians, ministers, and editors would begin complaining, in the words of the Pennsylvania Congressman David Wilmot, about ‘the alliance between an ancient and powerful Church and slave interests of America.’” Significant too was the fact that some southern writers, not necessarily enthusiastic about slavery, were sympathetic to a Catholic understanding of freedom that was not pitted against community and tradition. Influential Catholics joined southerners in scorning the radical individualism and laissez faire “dog eat dog” capitalism of the North.

Some Catholics did not see that much difference between slavery in the South and “wage slavery” in the North. Bishop John (“Dagger John”) Hughes of New York compared the master to the father, writing that the “difference in the relations and obligations of those who own slaves, and those who are masters of hired servants, or the parents of children, is rather one of degree than of kind.” Boston’s diocesan paper editorialized, “The *principle* of slavery is involved in apprenticeship, in imprisonment, in peonage, and in other forms of servitude.” Moreover, in Rome the Republican cause seemed disturbingly similar to the French Revolution and the nationalist radicals led by Garibaldi who were besieging the papacy and seizing convents and monasteries. *L’Osservatore Romano* depicted the Republicans in America as *radicali* who were “inflamed by puritan and abolitionist fanaticism and motivated by a poisonous hatred.” Pius IX had friendly contacts with Jefferson Davis, and when Davis was imprisoned after the war sent him a crown of thorns he had plaited with his own hands.

The Origins of Catholic Liberalism

It is among the many ironies of American history that what would later become the Catholic “liberal” alliance with the Democratic Party was forged in the conflict over slavery. It is not so much that Catholics were sympathetic to the South, and very few actually defended the institution of slavery, but they recognized their declared enemy in the Republican Party. For decades after the Civil War, Republicans pressed policies inimical to Catholics, including a “national education” policy that would have dismantled the huge parochial school system. Meanwhile, Leo XIII’s 1891 social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* roundly condemned both unbridled capitalism and socialism, proposing a distinctly communitarian or “corporatist” approach to social and economic relations. This approach was reiterated and strengthened in the 1931 encyclical of Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, and McGreevy does a

masterful job of demonstrating how this doctrine contributed to the powerful alignment of Catholics, the Democratic Party, and organized labor. Catholic social doctrine was seen as an alternative to, and bulwark against, socialism. In the early twentieth century, some Catholics thought their distinctive doctrine warranted the formation of a Catholic Party, but by then too many had risen to positions of leadership in the Democratic Party to make that an attractive option.

There were multiple tensions in the Catholic-Democrat alliance. Al Smith’s presidential candidacy in 1928 was supported by most liberal intellectuals, who also opposed the anti-Catholicism of a resurgent Ku Klux Klan, and FDR’s early policies as President were welcomed by Catholics as consonant with the directions of Catholic social doctrine. Also in the 1930s, however, Catholic sympathy for the “corporatist” regimes of Italy, Spain, and Portugal placed severe strains on the Catholic-liberal partnership. Catholic support for the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War, most particularly, was fatal to many cooperative relationships. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, liberal Jewish leaders made their own bid for acceptance by joining the American elite in letting Catholics know that they were on probation. The Catholic vote, especially in the urban north, was essential to Democrats, as were Catholic labor leaders in opposing socialism, but Catholics were still suspected of divided loyalty between Church and country, and of subscribing to a view of society inimical to American democracy.

The early 1930s, McGreevy writes, was a high point of the Catholic-liberal alliance. Then FDR turned from economic planning and distributive justice, the directions favored by Catholic leaders, to economic growth. Then came the Spanish Civil War. Then came the radio priest Fr. Charles Coughlin, an early enthusiast for FDR who later turned against him and toward the advocacy of strange doctrines, including anti-Semitism. The Spanish war passed, Fr. Coughlin was silenced by church authorities, and Catholic adherence to the Democrats held firm, but things would never be the same. Liberalism—or progressivism, as it was then called—had many parts. “As long as American reformers focused on economic reforms, Catholics proved loyal allies,” McGreevy writes. “But important components of progressive activism lay in the cultural sphere, as suggested by liberal campaigns for more explicit sex education in the schools, less rigorous censorship of books and films, and greater access to birth control.” On contraception and censorship, Catholics, interestingly enough, were fighting to uphold policies earlier put in place by Protestants. Many Protestants were happy enough that Catholic-led efforts such as the Legion of

Decency were bearing the odium for the censorship that, in fact, most Protestants favored.

An Alliance Shattered

The definitive change came with abortion. Against the advocacy for liberalized abortion law in the 1960s, Catholics stood alone. Evangelical Protestants, today so prominent in the pro-life movement, were then on the other side. When the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision came down from the Supreme Court, the Southern Baptist Convention hailed it as a victory for "religious freedom" against Catholic efforts to "impose" their doctrine on others. But the Catholic-Democratic alliance, along with much else, was shaken to the foundations. In 1960 the election of John F. Kennedy was supposed to have signaled the end of politically potent anti-Catholicism, even if his triumph was purchased by the promise that he would not let his Catholicism influence his politics. The bishops, touchingly eager for Catholic "acceptance," did not publicly challenge that fatal pact. The carefully orchestrated campaign by Catholic theologians against *Humanae Vitae*, Paul VI's 1968 encyclical on human sexuality, including contraception, further and massively weakened adherence to Catholic distinctiveness in the public square. But the breaking point was abortion.

It may be hard to remember now, but McGreevy is surely right in saying that "well into the 1960s the Democratic Party arguably stood to the right of the Republicans on issues of sexual morality." The party of big business, what came to be called country club Republicanism, stood sniffingly aloof from moral and social questions. But in 1972, the Democrat George McGovern could choose the staunchly pro-life Thomas Eagleton as his running mate, and when Eagleton was forced to drop out, he replaced him with Sargent Shriver, also pro-life. In the early 1970s, the number of prominent anti-abortion Democrats was striking. For example, Maine Senator Edmund Muskie, Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill, and Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, who wrote of his "personal feeling that the legalization of abortion on demand is not in accordance with the value which our civilization places on human life." Kennedy hoped his generation would be remembered as "one which cared about human beings enough to halt the practice of war, to provide a decent living for every family, and to fulfill its responsibility to its children from the moment of conception."

All that would soon change, and nobody played a larger part in the change than Jesuit law professor and, later, Massachusetts Congressman Robert Drinan. In the 1960s, Drinan proposed "that Catholics simply abstain from the abortion debate, since to condone

any abortion, even for the health of the mother, meant Catholics would be guilty of regulating, and implicitly approving, an abhorrent practice." It was a disingenuous proposal, and Drinan would later become a reliable supporter of the abortion license, supplying Catholic politicians with a moral cover for their switch to a pro-choice stance.

In the early 1980s Mario Cuomo, Governor of New York, was probably the most popular Democratic politician in the country, and, with the aid of Fr. Richard McBrien of Notre Dame, he offered an apparently sophisticated argument for the "personally opposed, but . . ." position of Catholic politicians. He even harked back to the 1850s when Catholics were "despised by much of the population" and the bishops declined to issue an outright condemnation of slavery. The bishops "were not hypocrites," Cuomo observed; "they were realists." And so now, although Catholics encounter far less hostility, they still need to "weigh Catholic moral teaching against the fact of a pluralistic country where our view is in the minority." That logic, critics observed, did not prevent Cuomo from pressing hard for the abolition of capital punishment, a position decidedly more in the minority. By the late 1980s the pro-abortion litmus test was securely in place and no Democrat with national ambitions could afford to dissent. With very few exceptions, Catholic politicians in the party had taken JFK's 1960 pledge to the Baptist ministers of Houston not to let their religion influence their political decisions.

"You Catholics . . ."

In 1984, I hosted a dinner for some twenty-five media leaders to meet the newly arrived John O'Connor as Archbishop of New York. There had been a media ruckus a few weeks earlier when O'Connor challenged Geraldine Ferraro, then the pro-choice Democratic vice presidential candidate, on her claim that there was more than one "Catholic position" on abortion. O'Connor thought that, as Archbishop, he had a responsibility to clarify the Catholic position. In the course of the dinner, Max Frankel, then executive editor of the *New York Times*, raised the issue and said, "When John F. Kennedy was elected, some of us thought that the question of whether you Catholics belonged here, whether you understand how we do things here, had been settled once and for all. But I have to tell you frankly, Archbishop, that in the few weeks you've been here some of us are asking those questions again." Whether Catholics belong here. Whether they understand how we do things here. Suddenly it seemed like a hundred years ago.

Reflecting on the different Catholic understanding of freedom, McGreevy writes: "This intensely social

tradition struggled to absorb insights from its liberal counterpart. But just as the work of John Courtney Murray, Jacques Maritain, and others on democracy and religious liberty reached fruition at the Second Vatican Council, the abortion debate shattered this Catholic-liberal rapprochement.” McGreevy takes passing notice of another rapprochement, that between Catholics and evangelical Protestants, notably on cultural and moral questions. With the Reagan presidency, Republicans skillfully nurtured this realignment. More than McGreevy allows, the 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus* signaled a new appreciation of market economics in Catholic social doctrine, a development also favorable to Republicans. He observes, “President George W. Bush and his advisers routinely invoke Catholic ideals. Practicing Catholics are increasingly likely to vote for Republicans in presidential elections.” He then adds, “But Republican leaders remain indifferent to income inequality in the United States and to the immorality of tax cuts disproportionately benefiting the wealthiest Americans.” One might point out that an equal rate of tax decrease or increase will always affect most those who pay the most taxes. But I digress.

I expect that McGreevy’s final chapter, on the sex abuse scandals that broke out in 2002, was added at the insistence of the publisher. It is disappointingly thin and one hopes it will be omitted or entirely rewritten for future editions. While McGreevy does acknowledge the large part played by doctrinal dissent and clerical homosexuality in the scandals, he allowed the furor of the moment in which he was writing to obscure his historical perspective. On page 289, referring to the scandals, McGreevy dismisses the previous 288 pages of history with an abrupt, “And then none of this mattered.” He surely knows that is not the case. For better or worse, the firestorm over the scandals has subsided and is not likely to be reignited. The ongoing tensions and conflicts inherent in two very different ideas of freedom, however, will continue to matter, and to matter greatly, in the unfolding story of Catholicism and the American experiment.

Choosing Religions

The Supreme Court’s *Everson* decision of 1947, which established the “wall of separation” in the service of the naked public square, put the matter bluntly. There Justice Robert H. Jackson wrote that the assumption behind the public school system “is that after the individual has been instructed in worldly wisdom he will be better suited to choose his religion. . . . Our public school, if not a product of Protestantism, at least is more consistent with it than with the Catholic culture and scheme of values.” Religion is a private

choice made by the autonomous individual. Against this is a “culture and scheme of values” in which one is born and sacramentally reborn into a community of authoritatively defined tradition. On the one side: individuality, autonomy, choice; on the other: community, tradition, authority. The first triad is said to represent “American freedom,” and by it national unity is constituted. Commitment to autonomy, oddly enough, is supposed to establish national unity. It is a jealous unity that will abide no compromise with the competing triad of community, tradition, authority. This idea of freedom serves, in the language of H. Richard Niebuhr, the “Christ of culture.” Of American culture; and of American *Protestant* culture to the degree that it is necessary to ward off the threatening alternative of Catholic culture.

The conflict over abortion brought things to a head also by revealing the divided soul of American liberalism. The liberalism of, for instance, Martin Luther King and the early civil rights movement was embracing, reaching out to include the previously excluded within the community for which we accept common responsibility. Modern liberalism took a decisive turn with the movement for “liberalized abortion law” in the 1960s. American liberalism had always been schizophrenic, divided between individual self-expression and communal solidarity. By planting the liberal flag on the pro-choice side of the abortion conflict, its individualistic propensities gained ascendancy, even to the point of driving a lethal wedge between mother and child, the most fundamental of communal bonds. Autonomy is a jealous god.

Such are among the many reflections provoked by *Catholicism and American Freedom*. One is struck by how few Catholic intellectuals of stature have addressed the conflict between the two ideas of freedom. Jacques Maritain and John Courtney Murray, of course, but the overwhelming majority of the Catholic intellectual establishment since Vatican II has been preoccupied with intra-Catholic disputes related to a one-sided accommodation of Catholicism to the idea of freedom as autonomy. The spirit of Emersonian gnosticism described in Harold Bloom’s *The American Religion* has made deep inroads also among Catholics in America. One is almost inclined to think that Leo XIII’s 1899 condemnation of “Americanism” in *Testem Benevolentiae* was issued about sixty-five years too early, but then one has to wonder what would be the Americanization of Catholicism had it not been issued when it was.

Probing Possibilities

Never was it, and never could it be, a stark choice between one idea of freedom or another. Maritain and Murray were among the few who understood the need

for mutual influence, for a constant probing of possibilities that would preserve and enhance the truth in each idea. Today there are many intellectuals—one thinks, for instance, of Michael Sandel, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Mary Ann Glendon, and Charles Taylor—writing about the limits of liberalism, or at least of the liberalisms that have defined “American freedom.” A “communitarian” movement has had a not insignificant influence in the last two decades, and hyper-liberals of a postmodernist bent accent “the social construction of reality.” Out of these sometimes confused and contradictory intellectual churnings, one may be allowed to think, could come a culturally potent understanding of self and community that will modify the stark antinomy between freedom as the freedom to do what one ought and freedom as the freedom to do what one wants.

At the same time I was thinking about McGreevy’s book, I was reading Paul Elie’s engaging new work, *The Life You Save May Be Your Own* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 560 pp., \$27). The book is a critical appreciation that tells the stories of four Catholic thinkers and writers: Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Walker Percy, and Flannery O’Connor. The first three were converts, and the last a Catholic in a South practically without Catholics. European Catholicism, Elie notes, was accustomed to being the majority religion and way of life, indeed to constitute a Catholic culture. It could not have been more different in America. Elie does not put it quite this way, but in America, and for his four subjects, Catholicism was what today is fashionably called the Other. In the American context, there was something even exotic about the idea of community, tradition, and authority. For the three converts, becoming Catholic was quite self-consciously the way to becoming individuals, particular persons, situated selves. As for O’Connor, she knew that intuitively, and became ever more what she always was.

The juxtaposition of the McGreevy and Elie books is powerfully suggestive. Perhaps, one may be permitted to speculate, there is underway, or at least a hint of a groping toward, something like a cultural transformation in what is meant by American freedom. Perhaps, just perhaps, it poses the prospect of individuality realized by an act of decision in obedience to a communal gift of grace. It may be that the tradition—and it is a tradition—of anti-traditionalism has exhausted itself. The authority of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker, and Robert H. Jackson in their hatred of authority no longer appeals. A new generation may weary of running with what Harold Rosenberg memorably called “a herd of independent minds.”

These are but possibilities, but they are possibilities enhanced by many developments, not least being an

evangelical Protestantism that is, more and more, the only Protestantism of public influence, and that is increasingly less dependent upon anti-Catholicism as a necessary component of its self-understanding. The elite liberal class, those who control what are called the commanding heights of culture, will continue to view both Catholicism and evangelicalism as the Other. The first is seen as exotic and seductive, but finally oppressive and deserving of hatred; the second is viewed as ignorant, stifling, and deserving of fear and loathing. But all that could change over time. It depends in very large part upon thinkers, writers, and public exemplars who persuasively propose a more compelling idea of freedom. Such, at least, are some of the thoughts provoked by the gift that is John T. McGreevy’s *Catholicism and American Freedom*.

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WHILE WE’RE AT IT

■ “Judeo-Christian.” The American Muslim Council and some others really don’t like the term. That’s understandable. In speaking of our culture, they say we should say “Judeo-Christian-Islamic” or “Abrahamic.” The National Council of Churches has joined the movement to abandon “Judeo-Christian.” Ted Haggard of the National Association of Evangelicals has a different view. “A lot of the ideas that underpin civil liberties come from Judeo-Christian theology. What the Islamic community needs to make are positive contributions to culture and society so we can include them.” That puts it a bit bluntly, but he is, I think, on the right side of the argument. People who live in places such as Dearborn, Michigan, can tell you that many Muslims have made many contributions to our society. But there are only about two million Muslims in the country and, with few exceptions, they are newcomers to the American experiment. We must wish them well. We should not, in order to make people feel good, rewrite American history, however. The founders of the experiment thought this was, quite simply and obviously, a Christian society. “Judeo-Christian” gained currency in the last century for good reasons. One reason was undoubtedly to make the two percent of the society that is Jewish feel more secure, and their sense of insecurity was not without grounds. At a deeper and theological level, Christians have come to appreciate more fully their dependence on Judaism. Christianity is inexplicable apart from Judaism. That is in no way the case with respect to Islam, which claims

to be the true revelation superseding both Judaism and Christianity. We must hope that, over time, Muslims will find in Islam the resources for affirming the constituting truths of this Judeo-Christian society and culture. Whether they do or not, they can be welcomed as full citizens along with many others from outside the Judeo-Christian orbit who do not demand that we revise our national identity by speaking of a Judeo-Christian-Buddhist-Hindu-Islamic-Agnostic-Atheist society. Judeo-Christian morality undergirds America's welcome to people who are not Jews or Christians in a way that Islamic morality, for instance, does not support the welcoming of outsiders to countries that are dominantly Muslim. However well intended, it is no service to Muslims to encourage them to challenge the moral and cultural identity that is the basis of their welcome and security in Judeo-Christian America.

■ Elaine Pagels of Princeton has another book out celebrating early Christian gnosticism. *Beyond Belief* is about the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas, written in the second century and much amended later, which Pagels prefers to the canonical Gospels, and especially to the Gospel of John. "One of its central messages," Pagels says in an interview with *Publishers Weekly*, "is that there is divine light within each person. Reacting to Thomas' teaching, the author of the Gospel of John has Jesus always declaring that Jesus is the only light of the world. . . . Thomas is not a specifically Christian book, if by Christianity one means believing that Jesus is the only Son of God. Thomas is not about Jesus, but about the recognition of the light within us all. In this way, Thomas has a close affinity with Jewish mysticism." Well, at least a close affinity with about 80 percent of everything in the "Spirituality" section of Borders or Barnes & Noble. The Gospel of Thomas as celebrated by Pagels is marvelously attuned to what Harold Bloom calls in a book by that title, *The American Religion*, namely, gnosticism pitched to a popular and apparently inexhaustible appetite for self-flattery.

■ Historian James Hitchcock of St. Louis University has some fun with the special issue of the *National Catholic Reporter* marking the thirtieth anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. The pro-life movement, say the writers of *NCR*, has failed. It has failed in persuading Americans; it has failed in maintaining a civil discussion of a polarizing issue; and, above all, it has failed to follow the late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin's "seamless garment of life" proposal which, according to *NCR*, means that abortion is one issue among many and, since it is outnumbered by other issues backed by pro-choice Democrats, support for pro-life Republicans is morally precluded. In fact, Bernardin intended no such relativizing of the priority of abortion. In his

aforementioned book *Catholicism and American Freedom*, John McGreevy notes that Bernardin's last public statement, issued four days before his death in 1996, urged the Supreme Court to recognize that "there can be no moral and legal order which tolerates the killing of innocent human life." If Americans continue to "legitimate the taking of life as policy, one has a right to ask what lies ahead for our life together as a society." From his deathbed, the Cardinal made clear that—however others may abuse his language about a seamless garment and a consistent ethic of life—abortion is not just one issue among others. But now back to Professor Hitchcock's little exercise: "If the *NCR* were consistent it would, for example, caution the opponents of capital punishment not to be shrill, warn them that often they seem insensitive to the suffering of the families of murder victims, recall that through most of its history the Church has supported capital punishment, and discuss the complex issues of deterrence, punishment, and restitution. The editors would deride liberals for supporting Democratic politicians, such as Clinton, who support capital punishment. Opponents of capital punishment would be urged to enter into respectful dialogue with its supporters, with an aim to discovering the psychological and social assumptions which underlie the two sides of the debate. Approaching the issue in terms of moral absolutes would be deemed counterproductive and disruptive of civil peace, and activists would be reminded that they have failed to persuade a majority of their fellow citizens on the issue. Thus, the editors would point out, the number of people executed in the United States continues to increase, the movement is a failure, and its members should at least temporarily withdraw from the fray." "If the *NCR* were consistent." If pigs had wings.

■ "Today, the United Nations is more relevant than ever." Such was the headline of a full-page ad in the *New York Times* signed by nearly two hundred religious leaders. The signers of the tribute to the UN and its Secretary General Kofi Annan—and the not-so-hidden attack on George W. Bush and America's alleged unilateralism—included no Jews. There was a sprinkling of leftward Catholics and a few Muslims and Buddhists, but it was essentially a statement by officials of mainline-oldline-sideline Protestantism, with the former and present heads of the National Council of Churches leading the list. The ad featured an inspiring observation by Hiroshi Matsumoto, president of Inner Trip Reiyukai International: "By increasing our spiritual awareness we can contribute meaningfully to global peace and harmony." The ad was sponsored by the World Council of Religious Leaders of the Millennium World Peace Summit, which has an

address in midtown. The Rev. James Park Morton, former dean of St. John the Divine Episcopal Cathedral, was on the list. Another name that might have been expected, that of the man for whom Morton had worked, was missing. The same issue of the *Times* carried a very long obituary in tribute to Bishop Paul Moore, who, at age eighty-three, had died the previous day. The juxtaposition of the ad and the obituary was suggestive, provoking as they did memories of a religious and cultural moment now long gone. Paul Moore and Jim Morton were among my friends way back then. When in 1972 Paul became Bishop of New York (that is how the Episcopal bishop was styled, and still is), he brought Jim from the then vibrant but now defunct Urban Institute in Chicago to be dean of the cathedral. (I was offered Jim's position in Chicago, but that didn't work out.) They declared their intention to transform St. John the Divine into the medieval model of the cathedral as "circus," and transform it they did: with the exoticisms of world religions, the avant garde banalities of art and theater, and occasional flirtations with the blasphemous. St. John the Divine became the very definition of trendiness. Paul was very much in the "prophetic" mode as well. During New York's fiscal crisis of the 1970s, he thundered from the pulpit against Wall Street's malefactors of great wealth. Last March, shortly before his death, he preached his last sermon in the cathedral, targeting U.S. policy in Iraq. "It appears we have two types of religion here," he said. "One is a solitary Texas politician who says, 'I talk to Jesus and I am right.' The other involves millions of people of all faiths who disagree." But I couldn't help liking Paul. Born into great wealth and social prominence, Paul's life was the perfect model of the patrician noblesse oblige that seems to have quite disappeared from American life. Tall, rugged, a much decorated marine captain who had fought in Guadalcanal, and the father of nine children, he was about as personable as human beings can get. He had worked in the inner city of New Jersey when there was great enthusiasm for urban ministries, and while I was in the inner city of Brooklyn at a black Lutheran parish we dubbed St. John the Mundane in distinction from St. John the Divine. At the cathedral, Paul and his wife Jenny lived in relative modesty in a part of what was originally built as the bishop's palace. He told me that J. P. Morgan was a cathedral trustee back then, and when some objected that the bishop did not really need fifty-seven rooms, Morgan put his foot down, declaring that "The bishop should live like everyone else in New York." Paul was uneasy about his wealth, and told how, as a child, when the chauffeured limousine passed bread lines, he would hide in shame on the limousine floor. We had a sharp disagreement when, in the early seventies, Paul wrote a glowing

introduction to the annual report of Planned Parenthood that set forth in great detail how much money abortion had saved the city in terms of education, welfare, crime, and keeping young predators in jail. He did not agree that this was tantamount to saying that the way to improve the city is to encourage the killing of the babies of the poor. Yet, when Jenny died and Paul married a woman who had only a tenuous relationship to the Christian teaching, he asked me to give her instructions in the faith. In view of our substantial differences, I declined. Paul had not a theological bone in his body. But, taken in all, Paul Moore was a piece of work, and we are not likely to see his kind again. Not least because the Episcopal Church, at least in New York City, will never again be what it was. The *Times* obituary was headed, "Episcopal Bishop Paul Moore, Jr., Dies." Thirty years ago, the word "Episcopal" would have been omitted. Then the *Times* and many others viewed the Episcopal Church as "the church" in New York, despite Roman Catholicism being, then and now, about fifty times larger. Still today, elegant church architecture throughout the city testifies to the time when it was the church of the Astors, DuPonts, Morgans, Vanderbilts, Mellons, and Roosevelts. There was a piquancy in the above-mentioned ad and Paul's obituary appearing the same day. In that final sermon in the cathedral addressing the Iraq war, Paul said, "I think it is terrifying. I believe it will lead to a terrible crack in the whole culture as we have come to know it." The culture as Paul Moore knew it had already cracked and collapsed a long time before, and some very good things were lost with it. Our falling out could probably not have been helped, but fondly and fervently I pray that he will rest in peace.

■ "All news all the time" is how a local radio station describes itself. All scandal all the time is what I don't want this section to become. But, from time to time, someone comes up with a new insight, or a fresh perspective on what we knew. That's the case with "Strangers in the Chancery" by sociologist Joseph E. Davis at the University of Virginia. Writing in *Society*, Davis takes his title from David J. Rothman's *Strangers at the Bedside*, an account of how, beginning in the 1960s, medicine lost much of its moral authority. There are striking parallels with what is happening with the bishops. I doubt if Davis is right that bishops today are more "strangers" to their people than were bishops fifty years ago, but the gist of Davis' analysis rings true. For instance: "The sexual abuse scandal is also likely to produce this indirect form of authority loss. As discussed, many of the key elements that shaped the transformation of medicine are in place: increased social distance, a broad erosion of trust, and a

constituency far from compliant. Moreover, medicine and doctors were only one institution and professional group among many to see trust and deference erode and their scope of discretionary authority sharply curtailed. This pattern shows an underlying cultural logic at work in American society rooted in an a priori skepticism toward the exercise of paternalism, an emphasis on individual rights and protections, and a deep suspicion of institutions. In organizations, this logic leads toward more bureaucracy and procedural rules, collective rather than individual decision-making, and the insertion of third parties (often other authorities) to constrain the actions of authorities. This logic too is playing itself out in the sexual abuse scandal. The policies adopted by the bishops in response to the scandal are the best illustration." Davis describes the "one strike and you're out" policy adopted by the panicked meeting of bishops in Dallas of last year, and concludes with this: "Protecting children from abuse is the justification for the drive toward proceduralism, collective decision-making, and the curtailing of discretionary authority. This is the worthiest of reasons but it is not the only one. The Catholic bishops first addressed the sexual abuse scandal in earnest ten years ago and apparently with great success. With a few notorious exceptions, repeat offenders have long since ceased to be shuffled from parish to parish and very few cases have come to light (in distinction to the public exposure of cold cases). If, in this sense, children are already safer, then why the current drum-beating for zero tolerance and zero room for pastoral discretion? Punishing the bishops is part of the story; simply having tougher rules for the sake of tougher rules is another. While these latter reasons may make everyone feel better, they are poor reasons for increasing procedural regulation. Bureaucratic structures, after all, tend to deliver an iron cage. They stifle creativity and charisma; they are blind to ends like charity and compassion; they have no inspiring mode of discourse; they do not facilitate strong group bonds; and they do not restore trust in persons. In other words, they do not supply many of the things Catholics across the board have insisted are so badly needed. As scandal works its effects, it is not too early to consider the unintended consequences of the solutions." Pray it is not too late.

■ Here is something one doesn't see every day. In fact, I don't recall anything like it. John Carroll, the top editor at the *Los Angeles Times*, sent this memo around the newsroom: "I'm concerned about the perception—and the occasional reality—that the *Times* is a liberal, 'politically correct' newspaper. Generally speaking, this is an inaccurate view, but occasionally we prove our critics right." He went on to criticize a story on the link

between abortion and breast cancer that gave full credence to those who denied the link and scoffed at those who take it seriously. The memo concludes: "We may happen to live in a political atmosphere that is suffused with liberal values (and is unreflective of the nation as a whole), but we are not going to push a liberal agenda in the news pages of the *Times*. I'm no expert on abortion, but I know enough to believe that it presents a profound philosophical, religious, and scientific question, and I respect people on both sides of the debate. A newspaper that is intelligent and fair-minded will do the same." Journalistic responsibility. It's an idea that could catch on.

■ The mischievous *Forum Letter* is up to it again. It reports that at a Rocky Mountain Synod meeting in Colorado Springs, Bishop Mark Hanson, head of the ELCA Lutherans, spoke on a sexuality study in which that communion is embroiled. Certainly, he said, "we're not going to base our position with regard to homosexuality on seven passages from Scripture." One pastor leaned over to a brother and said, "Isn't that more than we have on the institution of the Lord's Supper?"

■ "We are 100 percent focused on protecting children," a bishop tells me in a discussion of the Dallas "one strike and you're out" rule. One hundred percent leaves slight time or energy for anything else. Herewith a letter sent me by a priest in New England: "I agree with you that protecting children is imperative, but I am not as convinced as you seem to be that doing so is the bishops' collective and primary motive. I was visited recently by a sixty-eight-year-old priest who, fourteen years ago, told his bishop of a sexual indiscretion that occurred thirty-one years ago and involved a then sixteen-year-old girl. His admission was the occasion of his being prudently removed from his position as pastor of a parish. The concern expressed then was that living alone could place him, and others, at risk for engaging in inappropriate relationships. The priest accepted the conditions, attended a year-long therapy and renewal program followed by three units of Clinical Pastoral Education, and found ministry at a hospital where he worked successfully, effectively, and happily for the next thirteen years while living in a small community of supportive priests in a nearby rectory. The priests, and the hospital administration, were aware of his rather ancient transgression, and in many ways he was able to offer a perspective and experience that brought home to the other priests the fragility of the human spirit and the need for fraternal support. In the months following implementation of the reactionary Dallas policy, my friend was ordered to resign his ministry as hospital chaplain and accept

early retirement. He tearfully conceded. Last month, he was instructed to move out of the rectory in which he had found support, friendship, and community over the last fourteen years. At the age of sixty-eight, thirty-one years after his indiscretion, fourteen years into his repentance and renewal, the wisdom of the bishops is now that this priest should live alone and away from the support of his brother priests. This scenario is being repeated throughout the United States, and I believe it has nothing to do with protecting children. It has everything to do with 'risk aversion,' a term you used to describe the response of bishops to accusations against priests. Risk aversion is a concept that is wholly antithetical to 'the gospel of sin and grace, repentance and restoration.'"

■ There will be more in these pages on N. T. Wright's big new book, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Fortress). Wright argues the case that the historical evidence, contra Enlightenment liberalism, leaves us with no reasonable conclusion other than that what happened that Sunday morning is what the New Testament writers say happened. I mention the book now only to note that Wright has been elected Bishop of Durham. (Durham, where the Venerable Bede is entombed, is in my judgment the most impressive of the English cathedrals.) David Neff of *Christianity Today* observes the "providential irony" that Wright's predecessor at Durham was David Jenkins, who caused a stir by referring to the resurrection as "a conjuring trick with bones." The role of Providence in electing Anglican bishops is not entirely transparent, but Wright's elevation is certainly a happy turn. And it does return Durham to its tradition of scholar-bishops such as Joseph Lightfoot, Michael Ramsey, and Ian Ramsey.

■ The reviewer in *America*, the Jesuit magazine, *really* does not like Thomas Oden's *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*. It "advances a conservative and fundamentalist agenda," says John Saliba, S.J., Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Detroit Mercy. "Oden has nothing positive to say about the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches" and their efforts to "further mutual understanding and reduce conflict." Oden ignores the fact that "Christian movements that claim they are the only legitimate expression of true Christianity have tended to be intolerant and belligerent." As though that were not bad enough, Oden "offers no guidelines as to how the Church can react to technology and globalization." That's the least one should be able to expect from a theological book titled *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*. One might be justified in suspecting that the reviewer is no friend of the rebirth of orthodoxy.

■ The summer school catalogue of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley lists a slew of courses leading to a "Certificate in Sexuality and Religion." A person so certified is equipped "to advance the full inclusion of LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered] people in their faith communities." One course is "Blessing Same-Sex Unions" and is offered by Mark Jordan of Emory University. Assuming that "more and more Christian congregations will be blessing same-sex unions in the years to come," the class will wrestle with this question: "Should LGBT Christians want their unions blessed without first reforming the present theology and practice of 'Christian marriage'?" One conservative response to this is to say, "See, those people will never be satisfied. Try to be tolerant and bless their same-sex unions and the next thing they want is to change the meaning of marriage for everybody else." The more interesting response, I think, is to commend them for implicitly recognizing—despite public protestations to the contrary—that blessing same-sex unions does entail a reform (i.e., revolution) in the "theology and practice of Christian marriage" (without the sneer quotes). In a similar way, there was among Catholics some years ago a fairly influential organization called the Women's Ordination Conference. There was a big split within the organization between those who simply wanted to press for the ordination of women and those who contended that the ordination of women required a radical change in the theology and practice of priesthood. The second party is right. However much one may dissent from their purposes, those who recognize that the blessing of same-sex unions and the ordination of women are incompatible with the Church's understanding of, respectively, marriage and priestly ministry have the better part of the argument.

■ Among the books noticed in *Publishers Weekly* is *Pagan Babies: And Other Catholic Memories* by Cina Cascone. It is yet another bitter account of "the earthly purgatory" of growing up Catholic, complete with Sister Perpetua and her knuckle-thumping ruler. (The title refers to money sent to missionaries for the conversion of pagans.) That review is followed immediately by a rather favorable notice of Philip Jenkins' *The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice*. I expect an editor at *PW* was aware of the aptness of running the notices side by side.

■ There are in the world thousands upon thousands (nobody knows just how many) frozen human embryos, the "spares" of in-vitro fertilization (IVF) procedures. And there is a growing debate over

“embryo rescue.” This is a question very intelligently addressed by Dr. Nicholas Tonti-Filippini of the University of Melbourne in the spring 2003 issue of the *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly*. Embryo rescue involves a couple “adopting” an embryo by having it implanted in the woman’s womb. The child is brought to birth and reared as the partly natural/partly adopted child of the couple. On the face of it, this is a very pro-life thing to do, since the embryo would otherwise remain in a state of suspended development for an indeterminate period of time or would be thawed and quickly die. But there is, as I say, a very serious argument over the morality of embryo rescue. Some moralists, notably Germain Grisez and William E. May, approve, while others, such as William Smith and Tonti-Filippini are on the other side. There has been no definitive statement on the question by the Magisterium of the Church, and it is therefore a point of legitimate exploration and argument by Catholic thinkers. Without attempting to do justice to the elegance of Tonti-Filippini’s case, he recognizes the indisputably good, indeed admirable, intentions of embryo rescuers, but contends that it violates the sacramental bond of marriage in which the mutual gift of self includes the exclusion of other parties from the process of procreation. He offers other persuasive, if not conclusive, arguments, not least being the fact that embryo transfer is almost always (about 96 percent of the time) unsuccessful. It has been suggested that frozen embryos might be brought to birth by transfer to an artificial womb (ectogenesis) or to an animal of another species, such as a sheep. Tonti-Filippini writes, “Part of the intuitive rejection of the idea of ectogenesis or transpecies gestation is the thought that the developing unborn child would be denied a normal relationship to a woman, his or her mother, and that that relationship is not just biological. There is something very disturbing about a child having an animal or a machine for a birth mother.” To which, as he recognizes, the response is that the embryo would otherwise be denied birth or would die without further developing. Tonti-Filippini’s article is representative of the kind of careful moral reasoning on bioethical questions that is to be found in the *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly*. I do not mean that careful moral reasoning is not to be found in other publications, but the quarterly addresses these questions within a specifically Christian and Catholic framework. Each quarterly issue is handsome and big, over two hundred pages, and the articles range widely. Also of special interest in this issue is Mary Timothy Prokes on the body as sacramental or artifact, and extended discussions of John Paul II’s “theology of the body.” The quarterly is published by the National Catholic Bioethics Center, based in Boston, and individual

subscriptions are \$48 (\$120 for institutions). Write the *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly*, P.O. Box 3000, Denville, New Jersey 07834-9772.

■ Here’s more on the disputed question of “embryo adoption.” Paige Comstock Cunningham of Americans United for Life writes: “Is the embryo *person* or *property*? If a person, she cannot be bought or sold. Nor can her parents ‘give’ her away. The Thirteenth Amendment (abolishing slavery) prohibits the ownership of one person by another. If, however, the embryo is deemed to be property, he may be contracted like goods or services. Or, if the embryo is equated with human tissue, blood, or organs, she may be donated, but with no payment to the donor. Here arise the questions of who is the donor—the genetic parents or the embryo—and of the purposes for which the embryo may be donated.” The Bush Administration recently allocated \$1 million in support of embryo adoption, half of which went to Snowflakes, a Christian adoption agency. There are hundreds of thousands of frozen embryos, and, to date, sixteen babies have been born as a result of the Snowflakes program. Cunningham is inclined to think that the legal system is up to making the fine distinctions that can avoid Thirteenth Amendment and other problems, but she knows that abortion advocates will fight every step of the way, viewing any legal protection for the embryo “as a stealth assault on abortion rights.” She writes: “If questions of abortion advocacy did not eclipse the picture and embryo adoption was regarded as a method for providing infertile couples with a child, then the legal and moral questions might be more helpfully addressed. As long as this is not the case, every inch of linguistic and legal ground will continue to be contested. Is the very early human being ‘pre-embryo’ or ‘child,’ ‘pre-person’ or ‘person’? Is transferring such an entity to another couple ‘donation’ or ‘adoption’? Or is it something else entirely? It is not only possible, but imperative, that the law secure the future of ‘embryo adoption’ by creating a legal environment that protects the interests of everyone involved. Whether the abortion lobby and pro-life activists can tolerate such a politically necessary compromise is yet to be seen.”

■ I have written supportively of the bishops who have called for a plenary council in this country in order to put the government of the Church into a greater semblance of right order. There were three such councils in the U.S. from 1852 to 1884, but none since, and some think a council overdue. At the same time, some very thoughtful bishops have been cool to the proposal, fearing that canonical requirements on representation would turn it into something of a circus

not unlike the disastrous “Call to Action” conference in Detroit in 1976. That worry is reinforced by an article by Father Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., of Boston College, “The Authority of the Diocesan Bishop in the Roman Catholic Church,” published, somewhat improbably, in *Lutheran Forum*. While the editors of the magazine are promoting episcopal governance for Lutherans, Fr. Sullivan makes the case for a more congregational and lay-directed form of leadership for Catholics, and he thinks a plenary council may be just the instrument for achieving that goal. He sets forth a number of canonical provisions, to which he adds his own proposals, that would greatly expand participation in a council beyond the bishops, and would also mandate greater consultation by bishops in governing their own dioceses. His depiction of a plenary council does bear a striking resemblance to Detroit 1976. If a council is not the way to go, there is still the proposal on the table that the bishops should gather by themselves for an extended period of time in a remote, perhaps monastic, setting and with no press within hearing distance in order to sort out what has gone so very wrong with their leadership of the Church and what might be done about it. It seems, however, that there is no sense of urgency about any proposal for a thorough self-examination. Now that the publicity storm generated by the scandals has passed, the dominant mood seems to be one of relief and return to business as usual. The Long Lent that began in January 2002 would, many hoped, precipitate efforts aimed at deep reform and renewal. There is little evidence of that happening. Were that to happen, it would require that bishops be more fully what they are ordained to be, pastors of local churches charged with the tasks of teaching, sanctifying, and governing. One reform that is beginning to be discussed more seriously is that large dioceses be reduced to governable size. Cardinal Law in Boston is the most notable instance, but in case after case the sex-abuse scandals—never mind scandals of doctrinal, liturgical, and sundry moral delinquencies—reveal that ordinaries of dioceses are not minding the shop. And that is frequently because a diocese is too large for the exercise of the kind of pastoral attentiveness called for in the Church’s official understanding of the episcopal office. It is recognized by those discussing the matter that the idea of reducing the size of major sees may not be popular with bishops who have attained the dignity of occupying them.

■ The usual suspects beat up on Senator Rick Santorum for daring to state in public his position and that of the Catholic Church that, to put it delicately, homosexual acts are not morally unproblematic. By the time this sees print, the Supreme Court may have

reversed its 1986 *Bowers* decision that upheld the constitutionality of state anti-sodomy laws. I am not a fan of laws that are not intended to be enforced, but it is worth noting that Santorum’s offense was no more than that he agreed with the *Bowers* decision. Contrary to some reports on the media brouhaha, Santorum did receive support from Catholic bishops, notably from Cardinal Bevilacqua of Philadelphia and Bishop Wuerl of Pittsburgh. Not, however, from Father Robert Drinan, S.J. More than anyone else, Fr. Drinan, beginning almost forty years ago, promoted the rationalization by which Catholic politicians claimed to be liberated from the Church’s teaching, especially on abortion. On the Santorum flap, Drinan told the *Washington Post*, “Catholics have no right to impose their views on others. Even if they say homosexual conduct is unfitting for a Catholic, they have no right to impose that on the nation.” *catholic eye* impishly wonders about Drinan’s use of “they” in talking about Catholics. Senator John Kerry got a pass when, in speaking to a pro-abortion group about judicial nominations, he said, “Litmus tests are politically motivated tests; abortion is a constitutional right. I think people who go to the Supreme Court ought to interpret the Constitution as it is interpreted, and if they have another point of view, then they’re not supporting the Constitution, which is what a judge does.” The principle would seem to be that no Supreme Court decision should ever be overturned, including *Dred Scott*, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and, for that matter, *Bowers*. Kerry probably didn’t mean that. As Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson probably didn’t mean it when he said, “I would love to talk to the Pope about it.” The subject was the research use of embryonic stem cells, which Thompson approves. “I think it’s in line with Church teaching that instead of throwing valuable resources away we make use of them,” he said. In the same interview he allowed as how he had not read the recent Vatican statement, “On Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life.” I’m sure that Mr. Thompson would love to talk with the Pope, but if he’s really interested in what the Church teaches on this and other questions, he might begin by reading what the Church teaches. Or maybe the idea is that he could bring the Pope around to his point of view. Politicians tend to have a high estimate of their powers of persuasion.

■ Massachusetts Bill H. 3190 would, following the lead of almost two-thirds of the states of the Union, specify that marriage is a union between a man and a woman. Father James F. Keenan of Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Mass., is opposed to it and so testified at a hearing on the bill. As noted earlier, Fr.

Keenan has written extensively and sympathetically on gay rights, “queer” theology, and related matters. “Besides coming before you as a priest,” he told the solons, “I am here as a moral theologian. We theologians see our task in the Church as teaching and interpreting the Church’s tradition and in this sense we are somewhat like rabbis whose authority derives from an ability to teach and apply the tradition to our ordinary lives of faith.” Really? The authority of a rabbi is indeed dependent upon his personal wisdom and holiness, while with Catholic theologians there is the Magisterium that defines what the tradition is and, when necessary, authoritatively indicates its correct application to the particulars of life. Fr. Keenan’s formulation would seem to be yet another way of advancing the claim that academic theologians constitute a “parallel magisterium.” He goes on to cite a number of moral theologians who agree with him that homosexuals “retain their full range of human and civil rights because of their inherent dignity as human persons.” He names nine theologians but he could have named thousands, for that is, quite simply, the magisterial teaching of the Church. The difference is that Fr. Keenan and a few others contend that human and civil rights include the right of homosexuals to have their unions legally defined as marriage. Not only that, but he appears to believe that that is the only authentically Catholic position. “In this light, as a priest and as a moral theologian, I cannot see in *any way* how *any one* could argue for H. 3190 on *any* Roman Catholic traditional grounds” (emphasis added). So much for the many bishops, theologians, and priests who, in their several states and in their support for a federal marriage amendment, take the position that marriage should be legally defined as a union between a man and a woman. But Fr. Keenan did say that, as with rabbis, his authority derives from his ability. As with rabbis, one is free to consult another who is able to see what Fr. Keenan is unable to see. Even better, one might have recourse to someone who accepts the responsibility of being a teacher of what the Church teaches.

■ Expanding on “The Gift of Authority,” a 1999 statement of the international Anglican-Catholic dialogue, the Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation in the U.S. has come up with a number of proposals. It is suggested that Anglican bishops accompany Catholic bishops on their *ad limina* visits to the Holy See, a consultation with the Pope required of heads of dioceses every five years. It is also suggested that Episcopalians and Catholics be delegates to one another’s meetings, with full voice and participation but no vote. This would include everything from synods of bishops in Rome to the Episcopal House of

Bishops in the U.S. It is an interesting set of ideas, but not without notable difficulties. For one thing, it assumes, as is customary in Anglican-Catholic dialogue, a “special relationship” that makes Anglicans closer to Roman Catholics than other Christians. That place of ecumenical priority, as is made very clear in the 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (That They May Be One), is held by the Orthodox, who are lacking only full communion with Rome to be in full communion with Rome. Anglicans stress that they are in apostolic succession, but the 1896 decision of *Apostolicae Curiae* declaring that Anglican orders are “utterly null and absolutely void” is still the teaching of the Catholic Church, as recently reiterated, albeit in passing, by a statement of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. That would seem to pose a problem. A while back a Catholic archbishop attended an ecumenical meeting of Episcopal and Lutheran bishops, as well as other church leaders. An Episcopal female bishop was also present, and the archbishop was criticized by conservative Catholics for addressing her as “Bishop.” To which he responded, “She’s as much a bishop as the others are.” Apart from the question of orders, some experienced ecumenists are of the view that, with respect to theological substance, Lutherans are closer to Rome than Episcopalians. Others would extend that to evangelical Protestants, noting the unquestionable commitment of most evangelicals to the core doctrines of the Christian tradition. In any event, the singling out of Anglicans for *ad limina* visits and other official meetings would likely meet with vigorous protest from the Catholic Church’s other ecumenical partners. One cannot readily imagine *ad limina* visits as an ecumenical conference with Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and a host of others, none of whom holds himself or herself accountable to the Pope. With respect to origins, however, there is an Anglican distinctive. At least for high Anglicans, the Church of England *is* the Catholic Church in England. That self-understanding was rudely inconvenienced by the reestablishment of the Catholic hierarchy in England in the mid-nineteenth century, and is made additionally awkward by the fact that today there are more church-going Catholics than Anglicans in England. Nonetheless, the memories and the theology of high Anglicans continues to be potent, also in the minds of the thirty-six national Anglican churches of what is today called the Anglican communion. Moreover, in England and elsewhere, Anglicans more than others in the West have maintained the appurtenances of catholicity in liturgy, ceremony, nomenclature, and ecclesial structures. Then there is the factor that, for many immigrant Catholics in this country, the Episcopal Church represented the social and cultural status of their

assimilationist aspirations. That is still the case for some Catholics. So there is a lingering sense of a “special relationship,” and not only in the mind of the Anglican-Catholic Consultation. But I rather doubt that it is strong enough to move the recent suggestions from the Consultation beyond the level of interesting ideas.

■ The Washington-based Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) has a record of provoking salutary trouble from time to time. It recently issued guidelines for creating and sustaining something like a dialogue with Muslims. The guidelines delicately suggested that it is “unhelpful” and even “dangerous” when evangelical Protestant leaders publicly declare that Islam is a “wicked religion.” Typical of one strong reaction is columnist Cal Thomas, who writes: “As chronicled in this column over several years, invective against Christians, Jews, and all other non-Muslims regarded as ‘infidels’ rains down from Islamic pulpits throughout the world. The harsh rhetoric makes reference to Koranic justifications of violent means to religious ends. These include the takeover of not only the ‘West Bank,’ but all of Israel. Why would such people negotiate with ‘infidel’ diplomats who represent ‘the great Satan’ and settle for less when they believe their God wants them to take it all?” Thomas concludes, “Christians and Jews aren’t declaring war on the world, and they are not hijacking airplanes to fly into buildings or blowing themselves up among civilians. Those who do claim their mandate is from Islam. The shoe is on the wrong foot.” Well, yes and no. There is no doubt that the overwhelming preponderance of nastiness is coming from the Muslim side, but why, by responding in kind, should Christians accommodate Muslim radicals who want a holy war? We do not need to choose between being thugs or wimps, and the IRD guidelines certainly do not advocate wimpiness. They do recognize our obligation to explore whatever truth Christians and Muslims can affirm together, our interest in avoiding an unmitigated clash of civilizations, possibly descending into religious warfare, and our responsibility as the stronger party to take the initiative in building a climate of trust—or at least of reduced distrust—in which the more sensible voices within the worlds of Islam can gain a better hearing. The IRD guidelines got it just about right, I think, and I would say that even if I were not on the board of that fine organization.

■ “A lost chance for moral leadership,” is how Philip F. Lawler, Editor of *Catholic World Report*, describes the role of the Holy See in the debate leading up to intervention in Iraq. “The just war tradition gave the

Church a means of imposing restraints on warfare. By moving away from that tradition, Church leaders undermine their own influence.” There is no doubt that some in the Vatican not only moved away from that tradition but flatly rejected it. Archbishop Renato Martino of the dicastery known as Justice and Peace, for instance, appeared to jettison 1,500 years of moral teaching by declaring, “There is no such thing as a just war.” Other Vatican officials were content to sing along with the sixties banality, “Give peace a chance.” Lawler writes, “We know what the Vatican does *not* want: war. But what alternative does the Holy See propose? What *does* the Vatican want?” The worldwide war on terrorism, writes Lawler, poses questions not adequately addressed by traditional just war formulations. To cite but one such question, “How can a nation-state respond to attacks mounted by non-governmental terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda? Is it justifiable to attack other states that support those terrorists? If so, how close must the connection be?” Lawler concludes: “Today more than ever—when the potential costs of war are so high, and threats to our civilization are so immediate—the world needs the moral guidance that the Church can provide. To abandon that effort at this crucial moment, to substitute bland and pious generalities for the judicious application of just war principles, to condemn military action without offering realistic alternative means of securing justice and peace—would be a serious abnegation of the Church’s mission to the modern world.” In recent months, curial officials have repeatedly said that the teaching of the Church is not pacifist. We knew that. But what wisdom does the Church have to offer statesmen who must make life and death decisions in a dangerously disordered world? We know that, too: centuries of the most careful reflection on the criteria of justice and injustice with respect to the use of military force. Unfortunately, that tradition was ignored or traduced in most of the statements from Rome this past year, even as it was explicitly engaged by political decision-makers here and in Britain. It is hard to disagree with the observation that we have witnessed “a lost chance for moral leadership.”

■ Now this, one might think, is a welcome instance of episcopal leadership. Bishop Daniel P. Reilly of Worcester, Mass., told Holy Cross College that he would not be attending the commencement at which Chris Matthews of television’s *Hardball* would be giving the address and receiving an honorary degree. Matthews has publicly and repeatedly declared himself to be “pro-choice.” “I cannot,” said the Bishop, “let my presence imply support for anything less than the protection of all life at all its stages.” But then a

measure of confusion enters the picture. The *Boston Globe* quotes the Bishop as also saying, "I am not questioning the fidelity of the College of the Holy Cross to its mission as a Catholic college or its dedication to the mission of the Catholic Church." I'm working on this. The Bishop's presence might imply support for something less than the Church's teaching on the protection of human life. On the other hand, the college's inviting Matthews to give the commencement address and awarding him an honorary degree does not raise a question about its dedication to the mission of the Catholic Church. Maybe the Church's teaching is not part of its mission. Or maybe, when it comes to fidelity, what bishops do matters while what colleges do does not. Or maybe he means that the fidelity and dedication of the college is already so much in question that he does not see the need to mention the obvious. Or maybe, dare one say, he is trying to please everybody by boycotting the offending event and, at the same time, reassuring those responsible that he does not think it is really all that offensive. After all, those protesting the honor to Mr. Matthews are a momentary nuisance, but the bishop has to live with Holy Cross. Or maybe the statement is to be read as saying, "My attending the event would imply infidelity but your sponsoring it does not because your fidelity is not in question." I need some help here. Instances of episcopal leadership are in such short supply that I'm reluctant to give up hope on the possibility that this was the real thing.

■ The next issue will include an examination of the new encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, issued this past Holy Week, looking with particular interest at what it says about intercommunion between Catholics and other Christians. I will look also at some intriguing hints that Rome may be reconsidering its position that Anglican ministerial orders are null and void. And, of course, there will be commentary on new developments on the scandal front. What is this by now, "Scandal Time XV"? With Frank Keating's

resignation as chairman of the National Review Board and sharpened disagreements at the semiannual meeting of bishops in St. Louis, there would appear to be no end in sight. In addition to which, gay rights issues are rising to the boiling point in several religious communities and, as a result of court decisions, in the more encompassing culture wars. Perhaps you, too, have noticed the number of commentators who recently have taken to referring to "the culture wars of the nineties." As though they are behind us. Dream on. And maybe there will be something worth reporting about the mood of Europe after I get back from the annual seminar in Krakow, Poland. So much happening. So little time.

■ In the vast ROFTER network, some folks have established discussion groups here and there. (ROFTER, I discovered, is the Canadian acronym for "Readers of FIRST THINGS.") We regularly receive requests from people who want to start a group in their area. Sometimes we are asked to send a list of subscribers in the area, but we can't do that since folks tend to cherish their privacy. So, since requests persist, here is what we have decided to do. If you're interested in convening ROFTERS who want to discuss articles appearing in the journal, drop us a letter explaining what you have in mind. We will then post in this section the names and addresses of conveners, and subscribers who are interested in being part of such a group can get in touch with them. Our lawyer insists that we say such groups are not officially sponsored by FT; we are only helping to facilitate such groups at the request of readers. Let's see how this works out.

■ We will be happy to send a sample issue of this journal to people who you think are likely subscribers. Please send names and addresses to FIRST THINGS, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, New York 10010 (or e-mail to subscriberservices@pma-inc.net). On the other hand, if they're ready to subscribe, call toll free 1-877-905-9920, or visit www.firstthings.com.

Sources: Roger E. Olson on Thomas Oden's *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, *Books & Culture*, May/June 2003.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT: Ted Haggard on "Judeo-Christian," *Religion Watch*, June 2003. Elaine Pagels on the Gospel of Thomas, *Publishers Weekly*, April 14, 2003. James Hitchcock on the *National Catholic Reporter*, *Human Life Review*, Winter 2003. Journalistic responsibility at the *L.A. Times*, *National Review Online*, May 29, 2003. The ELCA on homosexuality, *Forum Letter*, June 2003. John Saliba, S.J., on Thomas Oden, *America*,

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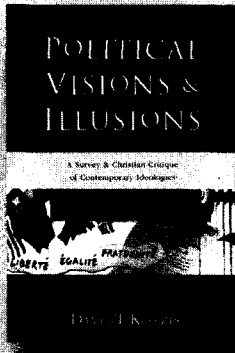
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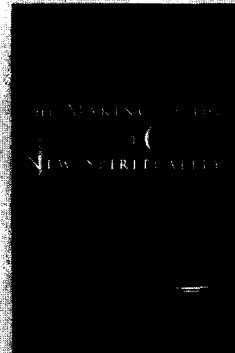
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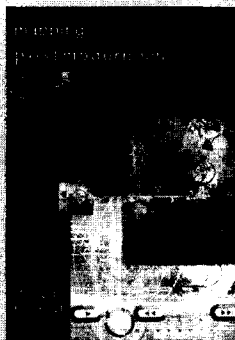
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